

NGF report reveals a host of hidden trends worth watching

There is always room between the lines, even when the lines are crammed with numerical analysis. Case in point: The "Golf Facilities in the U.S." report just released by the National Golf Foundation (see page 1).

The report doesn't spell it out, but it doesn't take a genius to see that golf course development continues to defy nationwide lending trends. When the bulk of last year's new courses were conceived, in 1991-92, *recessionitis* gripped American financial institutions, and few — especially golf course projects — could secure funding.

But somehow these projects *were* financed and built, which proves a couple things: That funding was probably secured from local sources, and golf's perceived "profit potential" remained high through the worst of economic times.

Despite the recession, despite the difficulty in securing financing, despite overbuilding in certain metropolitan areas, and despite the supposed prevailing wisdom that said golf can't possibly maintain its current course-a-day pace — loads of folks believed they could make money by building daily-fee golf courses.

They still believe it. There are 671 courses now under construction, about half of which will come on line during 1994.

That brings us to another trend: While golf courses are being opened at record pace, an overwhelming portion of them — 80 percent — are public.

Public-access golf development — daily-fee and municipal — is dwarfing private course construction. Why? Because the demand for public golf is clearly there and money to finance new private courses isn't. Apparently, lenders believe there are enough private courses — and they're probably right.

A full two-thirds of the nation's 14,000-odd golf courses are now public-access. And get this: 80 percent of the 1,360 that opened between 1990 and '93 are either daily-fee or municipal.

I believe these two figures will meet during the next



Hal Phillips,
editor

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Okay, the game's over... Close down the courses

Editor's note: I am herewith adding one more acronym to the industry parlance. *AHA!* now stands for American hyper-activist. That is the type of person who will stop at no deviant behavior (like spiking trees or pouring chlorine on a golf course) to stop another person from imposing his will on the environment.

"To a pure ecologist, there's no such thing as a pest. Instead, they're competing organisms," said Prof. Karl Danneberger. That pure ecologist could easily fit the mold of the *AHA!*

Some people make things happen. Some people ask, "What happened?" In the ongoing battle against certain vocal hyper-activists (*AHA!*), it seems the golf industry too often throws up its hands and collectively sighs: "What happened?"

Thank God for those stalwarts who don't — who stand up, present the facts (not the *AHA!*'s factoids) and stomp down on opinion with science. But let's, for a moment, play **What If**.

The proposition: What if Golf Nation collectively succumbed to all the *AHA!* demands and declared: "Okay. The game's over. The gig's up. We're tossing in the towel."

"No more fighting in board meetings and the courts to win approval for golf course developments. No more clashes over fertilizer and pesticide use. Go ahead, folks. Outlaw fertilizers, fungicides, insecticides, rodenticides. Close down golf courses the country over."

All you *AHA!*s out there, here's a sampling of what would happen if you had your way:

- **Get out the help wanted ads and dig deeper into that bottomless welfare till:** Golf course operations pay \$6.1 billion annually to more than 380,000 full- and part-time employees.

- **Get ready to ante up more of your paycheck; you won't miss it:** Golf courses five years ago paid \$1.8 billion in federal taxes, \$530 million in state taxes and \$350 million in local taxes.

And Clinton economic adviser Laura D'Andrea Tyson told congressmen the United States is "an undertaxed nation." There is "no relationship between a nation's tax burden and its rate of economic growth," she said (*Reason*, Aug.-Sept 1993).

- **Discover some new technologies and open some busi-**



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

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Letters

EPA CHIEF BROWNER REFUTED BY RISE

To the editor:

The guest commentary by U.S. EPA administrator Carol Browner in the January issue of *Golf Course News* contains a surprising amount of misinformation regarding golf course use of pest control.

We share the Administrator's interest in a clean environment, as well as in the safety and health of all our citizens, including golfers. And, we support her recommendations regarding Integrated

Pest Management (IPM) — practices to which members of RISE ascribe.

Unfortunately, however, many of Ms. Browner's comments skirt the facts, deal heavily in innuendo, and serve only to raise unwarranted fears. Presumably, her commentary is written to advance a questionable agenda which stresses reduced pesticide use solely for reduced use's sake, rather than a program which emphasizes responsible use and reduced risk. One would like to believe that these comments were

BROWNER POINTS? ...HARDLY

To the editor:

Your newest guest commentator, Carol Browner, shows great ignorance about the golf course industry in her January piece. She should get her facts and her thinking straight! "Thousands of geese" dropping dead could not possibly fit onto one green! It is a typical exaggeration for the sake of scaring her audience.

Ms. Browner's admonition that "pesticide run-off can severely threaten the drinking water supply," is old hat to golf course superintendents. Obviously, in her ignorance she has never heard of the Cape Cod Study or Dr.

Watschke's work at Penn State.

Golf course superintendents practiced IPM long before the word was invented. We chuckle when the GCSAA and the USGA come on the bandwagon and obviously convince the EPA what a good bunch we are. Now that you have a president who plays golf and we a prime minister who does likewise, we no longer have anything to worry about. Except that both gentlemen of the same stripe tend to make appointments based on quotas rather than merit.

Ah well, we'll survive!

Gordon Witteveen
Golf Course Superintendent
Board of Trade Golf Club
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

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submitted, under Ms. Browner's name, by a writer totally unacquainted with the extensive amount of EPA and industry-required pesticide testing and the proper practices followed by golf course management.

- Many may not know — but Ms. Browner certainly should — that all pesticide products used in the United States must have EPA registration and bear an EPA-approved label. To gain EPA registration, each product must undergo eight to 10 years of stringent scrutiny involving as many as 120 separate laboratory and field tests. On average, only one in 20,000 chemicals makes it through this intensive testing. Many of these tests — especially those involving laboratory animals — are specific for the human health and environmental concerns to which Ms. Browner refers. The EPA-approved label sets out the proper, legal instructions for pesticide use which golf course applicators, and other users, follow.

- Ms. Browner's statement that "heavy pesticide use doesn't just affect golfers..." deals in innuendo,

not fact. There is no evidence that pesticide use on golf courses is heavier than that needed for specific pest control, as recommended on the EPA label. Nor is there any evidence that golfers — or their children "who walk the course" — are affected by golf course pest control.

- Ms. Browner's comment that "... pesticide run-off [from golf course] can severely threaten the drinking water supply of the nearby community," is not backed by EPA's own studies. In its extensive survey of the nation's rural and urban drinking water, EPA reported that "concentrations of pesticides... detected were usually well below levels of health concern," and that "greater than 99 percent of the wells tested are free of any pesticide traces exceeding safe drinking water standards." There is no evidence that pesticide run-off from golf courses threatens community water supplies.

The Administrator's concern for a healthful, safe environment is proper and appreciated. That is a goal to which the pesticide industry subscribes, as well, and one to which we are committed.

Allen James
Executive Director
RISE (Responsible Industry
for a Sound Environment)

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Leslie comment

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nesses, or something: Golf courses contribute \$5.4 billion to the economy directly and account for another \$12 billion in indirect sales and household income, according to figures from way back in 1989. Operations of golf courses produce \$17.5 billion in business sales.

• *Prepare to feel more charitable:* The PGA Tour has raised hundreds of millions of dollars for charities. In 1993 alone, the total was \$22,752,137. The LPGA and Senior Tours also raise millions. And this does not include the

thousands of local charity tournaments held each year. You AHA!sdid support those in the Midwest left homeless by the floods last year, right?

• *Close 'em or pay for 'em yourselves:* Communities with recreation programs supported largely by profits from municipal golf courses would have to find other sources. We know an AHA! would be right there to help.

• *Moms, or Dads, return home:* Military courses subsidize child care at the bases. But parents could pay up, or stay home.

• *Find another sucker:* You know about all that effluent now

being used on golf courses? Find another receptacle. How about AHA!'s backyards?

• *Prepare to die:* It's interesting to note that if penicillin were introduced today it would not be allowed. It killed more than half the test rats. Huge amounts of time and money are spent on pesticides and other products before they are allowed in the marketplace.

Dr. Bruce Ames of University of California-Berkeley says when pesticides are not used, plants produce thousands of times more carcinogens.

Dr. Stanley H. Schuman, medical director of the Agromedicine

Program at Medical University of South Carolina, reported in 1990 that an approximate 30 percent reduction in stomach cancer in the last 30 years is attributable to the use of pesticides in food production.

Ironically, stress and worry cause cancer. Could it be that the AHA!'s of the world, who have perpetrated a scare on us all, have caused more cancer than all the pesticides?

• You really want to discontinue pesticides? One-third to one-half of Americans would go hungry today if no pesticides were used. To "organically" grow the same amount of food as we do today with pesticides, we'd need

another 483 million acres.

The number of people fed by a single farmer has increased from six people at the turn of the century to nearly 100 today. And since the 1950s the amount of heavy equipment, seed, fertilizers and pesticides required to feed one person has tended downward. Although the total amount of pesticides used in U.S. agriculture increased by 100 percent between 1965 and 1982, it declined by nearly 20 percent between 1982 and 1990. Changes in farming practices have also resulted in a 90-percent reduction in farmland erosion on typical soils and a 50- to 60-percent reduction on highly erodible soils. (USDA Soil and Water Conservation Society, 1992)

It is estimated that if it hadn't been for these advances in safe conservation practices, "we'd already have plowed under [nearly] one million square miles of wildlife habitat for food production ... since 1940." (Dennis Avery, fellow, Hudson Institute, Hudson Opinion, December 1991)

The fewer pesticides you use, the more land you will have to take out of retirement. And, sorry, you can't grow bananas in Maine.

• *Filter your own water:* Managed turfgrass filters water far better than unmanaged land. Plus, golf courses are graded and developed to reduce runoff—and therefore erosion. Once the land degrades, prepare to lose a tremendous amount of infiltration and biological activity that comes from maintaining fine turf. This holds true for home lawns as well.

• *Hope you're cold-blooded—in a bodily function sense of the term:* Turfgrass acts as a marvelous air conditioner. Let all those acres of turfgrass grow over with bushes and whatnot and prepare for those hot summer days to get hotter.

• *Get out your hammer and nails:* Many types of birds thrive on golf courses. But, of course you can find them new homes.

• *Oh, and about the value of houses neighboring golf courses?* Neighbors' homes are valued at 30 to 50 percent more because of the courses. Mr. and Ms. AHA!, when the courses are closed, just tell the ex-neighbors' lawyers to contact your lawyers.

We could go on and on here. But even AHA!'s hopefully get the point. Then, again, some may not. Some may be predisposed like National Wildlife Federation President Jay Hair, who reportedly proclaimed: "This big, booming business, agriculture, is also killing the world. I mean that literally."

Some may not flinch, like the Sierra Club, which accuses the Farm Bureau and other groups of conducting a "massive and brutally destructive anti-environmental onslaught." (AgVenture of the Wisconsin Farm Bureau, March-April 1993)

But others may turn an ear and spin some of this information through their minds. If you know a AHA! pass along this commentary. Then let me know his response. Should be interesting.

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