

There's more to ponder than pesticide use

By PETER BLAIS

SUPERINTENDENTS=PESTICIDES=CANCER

It's an equation the golf industry claimed (and hoped) never balanced. The latest GCSAA study showing the increased likelihood of superintendents dying of cancer has caused some to re-examine that belief.

Certainly, opponents of the golf industry will jump all over any potential connection between pesticides and cancer. But before you run off to join their holy crusade against golf and the chemical companies, let's take a look at those plying the course management trade.

Superintendents are a hard-working lot. Their make-up and the nature of the job put them on a collision course with a number of factors that have been linked to increased cancer risk.

• *Stress.* Anxiety is a constant companion of anyone whose job is dependent on the whims of a doctor/lawyer/businessman who thinks he is an expert on growing grass because of his two-week golfing vacation in Scotland back in 1987. Throw in a million-dollar maintenance budget, 70-hour work week, responsibility for 20 employees and increasing contact with EPA, DEP, OSHA and the like, and the stress rarely ends. *Stress* has been linked to cancer.

• *Smoking.* I don't have the scientific data to support it, but the cloud of smoke I walked through on my way to educational sessions and exhibits at the recent GCSAA Conference in Dallas leads me to suspect that superintendents smoke more than the general population. Maybe it's the stress that makes you light up. *Smoking* has been linked to cancer.

• *Weight.* On more than one occasion in the GCSAA Conference Exhibition Hall, I noticed two well-fed superintendents finding it difficult to pass by one another between those tightly spaced booths. Being 30 pounds overweight myself, it's hard for me to recommend people shed the extra pounds. What's that old saying? People who live in cellulite houses shouldn't throw calories. Maybe it's the stress. Maybe it's spending too much time in the office satisfying DEP, EPA and OSHA paperwork requirements rather than physically working the course. But whatever, excess *weight* has

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Recognizing, preserving golf courses as open space

By DAVID MACDONALD

I see golf courses in a different light than most of you. I don't play golf, but I do enjoy hiking, fishing, sledding and cross-country skiing. I value greatly three nearby golf courses that provide undeveloped open space for these and other outdoor activities to our local communities.

Golfers and conservationists are forging new partnerships, including the New York Audubon Society's efforts to preserve natural habitats — through its Golf Course Wildlife Sanctuary Program — and on Kiawah Island in South Carolina, where it recently took over stewardship of the



David MacDonald

David MacDonald lives and works on Mount Desert Island for the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, a state-wide non-profit land trust that has helped protect more than 55,000 acres and 160 islands in Maine.

Ocean Course.

Here on the coast of Maine, there is potential for similar efforts, in order to stem development pressure, buffer a national park and protect traditional recreational uses of golf courses by local residents.

In addition to the three golf courses, our community also happens to be the home of Acadia National Park, which offers some of the most diverse outdoor opportunities in the nation, drawing millions of visitors each year. Even in such a setting, with dozens of mountain trails and miles of shoreline from which to choose, golf courses hold their own as providers of significant open, recreational space.

What makes the courses so appealing as community open space is they usually back right up to the village — you can walk to them. Better yet, around here, the other side of the course often abuts an Acadia National Park boundary. The open space serves

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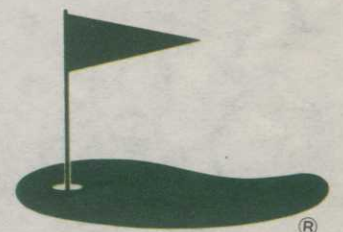
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Blais comment

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been linked to cancer.

• *Sunshine.* The opportunity to be out in it is the reason many got into the superintendent field. Did it ever occur to you that what your mother sent you outdoors to enjoy could ultimately kill you? Of course it didn't occur to her — and it probably didn't to you when you chose a career — that those ultraviolet rays might cut your life short. But *sunlight* has been linked to cancer.

• *Gasoline and asbestos.* How many superintendents have gas-powered vehicles in their maintenance fleet? How many work out of older maintenance buildings where the asbestos-wrapped pipes were recently sealed or removed? They have been sealed or removed, haven't they? And those funny, black rubber springs they have over the service station gasoline pumps to prevent fumes from escaping. You have got those on your pumps, too. Right? Because, as we all know, *gasoline* fumes and *asbestos* have been linked to cancer.

The point here is not to downplay the potential risks posed by chemicals. There are a lot of things at play and pesticides may be among them. Chemical manufacturers and GCSAA have been preaching for years that the best way to minimize any danger is through careful application and using recommended protective measures. *You* have control over whether you and your staff take those precautions.

That is the point.

You have control over many risk factors that threaten your life.

The stress getting to you? Spend more time with your family and a little less at work. Take a stress-reduction workshop. Exercise.

Still smoking? Quit, for God sakes. Hypnotism, charcoal filters, ear patches, cold turkey. Just do it.

The love handles getting too big? Go for the salad instead of the fries. Join Weight Watchers. Take a nightly walk around the neighborhood with your wife and kids. Re-take up golf.

Lucky enough to be spending more time on the course than in the office? Are you wearing a wide-brimmed hat, long-sleeved shirt and sunscreen when you're out there?

Pesticides *may be* a cancer risk. That's why associations, chemical companies and the government spend billions of dollars on medical research each year.

But you have control over much of the danger they may present, just as you do over other risk factors. So get a handle on them. You owe it to yourself, your family and the golf industry.

In that order.

Phillips commentary

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decade, making the U.S. golf course stock 75 percent public-access.

Why? Well, the private golf course stock is declining as more financially troubled clubs go public or semi-private. Private clubs have also been hammered by the crackdown on dues deductibility and the diminished ability to write off business meals.

And, as noted above, fewer projects are getting financed. Of the 671 courses under construction, only 109 are private — and 56 of those are mere expansions of existing facilities.

One last between-the-lines observation, harking back to what I mentioned about overbuilding. Much to the chagrin of National Golf Foundation Vice President Rick Norton, developers continue to build golf courses in already saturated metropolitan areas, making it harder for *everyone* to make a profit.

Consequently, some daily-fee courses aren't making the

money they and their creditors had anticipated.

The result? Bankruptcies, fire sales and general gettin' while the gettin's good.

There to eagerly snap up the scraps is golf's growing management industry, which can't believe its good fortune. As more golf courses open and fewer owners take the time to research location and market niche, more management firms are picking up salvageable properties for a song.

Why develop your own line of courses when folks will do it for you?

Management companies are booming, in part because they know how to run golf courses efficiently, using economies of scale afforded by their multiple course holdings. But they're growing so rapidly because they're preying — quite legally, mind you — on the failed efforts of individual developers too naive to compete.

That's life, between the lines.

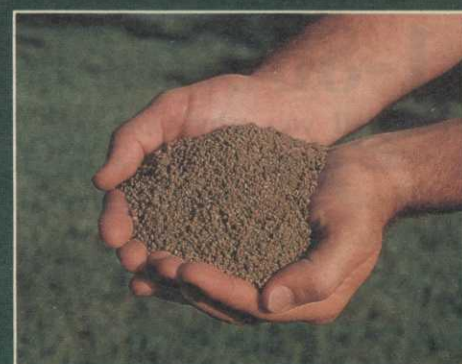
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