

COMMENTARY

Why is the environmental movement so irresponsible? Look in the mirror...

By MARK JARRELL

I've worked on golf courses for 24 years and been a golf course superintendent for the past 20. Other than genetic arthritis, I have no serious health problems. I have had the same spray technician for 12 years and twice-yearly cholinesterase testing shows no signs of pesticide exposure problems. My gut feeling — which means nothing — is that superintendents as a whole are healthier than the population at large. I'd be willing to bet that I could take a group of Florida superintendents to the offices of the NRDC, Sierra Club, or Greenpeace, challenge them to a game of softball, basketball, or touch football, and kick their butts.

I have lived beside the second green at Palm Beach National for over 14 years. Last night I had to help my cat defend his supper dish from a raccoon who had pushed through the screen to get onto the back porch for an easy meal. During my course inspection run the next morning, I noted the squirrel population explosion and searched the trees for the hawk that has been hunting the property for the past month or so. The ponds had their usual sentinels of anhingas, herons, and egrets, posted in numbers and territories designated by

Mark Jarrell is head superintendent at Palm Beach National Golf and Country Club in Lake Worth, Fla. The above column, which originally appeared in The Florida Green, has been reprinted with the author's permission.

the Supreme Commander in Chief. Ibis and cowbirds scoured the fairways in search of insects, periodically glancing my way to make certain I maintained the proper distance. As I listened to the songbirds and watched the sun come up over the water, I thought that the only thing that could improve this lovely day would have been an appearance by one of our occasional visitors like the gray fox, pileated woodpecker, or great horned owl.

Returning to my office, my stomach began to churn as I noticed the huge stack of articles on environmental issues piled up beside my computer as reference material for this article. Reading some of this garbage would have given one the impression that my recently completed morning tour was as hazardous as nude sunbathing at Chernobyl.

Consider such recently published remarks as these: "If you scraped a golf green and tested it, you'd have to carry it away to a hazardous waste facility." "... Some of us who enjoy golf despair that the game's high priests will ever get beyond their well-deserved reputation for causing environmental havoc." "... It's not uncommon for golfers and golf course workers to have adverse reactions to the array of chemicals used to maintain their turfgrass."

These quotes are significant, and especially disturbing, because they were made by golfers (one out of six members of the Sierra Club is a golfer). You can imagine the poison spewing from the mouths of those who associate golf with wealth,

greed, power and Dan Quayle. To say that our fight has only begun and it is an uphill battle is a gross understatement.

For many years I've had trouble understanding the huge disparity between what I know of the golf industry and what those calling themselves "environmentalists" claim about us. I naively thought, at first, that maybe there was a lot of truth to what was being said — it didn't seem logical, but no science was available for corroboration or rebuttal. Then I began to think it was just the old "squeaky wheel gets the grease" tactic—loud, repeated exaggerations, lies, and half-truths were necessary to nudge the slow-moving bureaucracy in the direction you wanted it to go. I also assumed (and still believe) that a lot of golf course criticism was rooted in the eternal conflict between "haves" and "have nots." Golf is perceived as a rich man's game. It was only after research showing golf's positive environmental record began appearing and was attacked and totally rejected by many of these so-called "environmentalist," that I began to get a clue as to what was really going on. Recent extensive reading and a seminar by Dr. Michael Coffman has been most enlightening.

To begin understanding why good science is rejected, why lies and distortions are standard operating procedure, and why common sense and logic aren't applied to environmental issues, just take a look in the mirror!

Has your value system changed from that of your

parents and grandparents? Do you believe in all the same principles upon which this country was founded and made great? Would you say your religious views are traditional Judeo-Christian, or have you adopted other beliefs? Did the counterculture movement of the '60s have any influence on you, or did you just hide under a rock and ignore it all?

Few of us described as "Baby Boomers," who are now the core of the American workforce, could honestly answer that our value systems have not evolved over our lifetimes. With a majority of us changing individually, society as a whole has been transformed, bringing with it both welcome and unwelcome changes.

Few would disagree that concern for preserving and protecting the environment has been a good change. The American people place great importance on this. What most of us don't realize is that this concern has been seized upon by people who have radically different beliefs from mainstream America, and they have inserted themselves into positions of leadership within many of the environmental organizations.

This is the reason for the lies, distortions, and lack of common sense and logic: By telling only part of the story, the majority of us who care about the environment are being manipulated into supporting actions we wouldn't if all the facts were known. According to surveys, 25 percent to 30 percent of us are concerned citizens who deeply

care about what is happening to the environment; another 20 percent of us are very active environmentalists; and probably less than 5 percent of us are the radical minority of the environmental movement.

Among the radicals and actives are the ones with hidden agendas and ulterior motives. They have permeated the leadership of many environmental organizations, often taking over and shifting focus of some of the older, more conservative organizations. Their belief systems are their religion and, as in any religious war, the end justifies the means.

Listing and describing these organizations and their belief systems is too lengthy for the purpose of this article (buy Dr. Michael Coffman's book, *Environmentalism: The Dawn of Aquarius or the Twilight of a New Dark Age* for detailed information). There are many similarities, subtle differences, variations, and even major differences in the philosophies of these radical environmental organizations. Few generalizations can be made that would be accurate and all-encompassing.

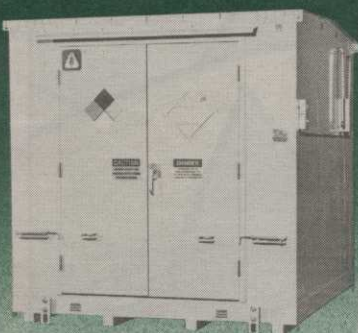
Most of them, however, reject the traditional conservation strategies and "wise use" philosophies. They believe there is no such thing as being a good steward of the land. Humans do not have dominion over the earth, according to their view, but share it with other species having equal value. Nature is good and man is evil; or, man is god, nature is god. Golf courses don't even exist in their new world order.

The above statements are simplistic and don't cover the full range of environmental radicalism, but are representative of key points. Whether they believe in animism, pantheism, biocentrism, eco feminism, gnosticism, eastern mysticism, neopaganism, occultism, planetization, sustainable development, maintenance of biodiversity, the Gaia theory, The Plan, or New Age, they share the common belief that a radical transformation of society must take place, and that using a sympathetic environmental agenda to attain their goals is their best opportunity for success. As far as I know, few of them offer any details for the construction and operation of this brave new world, just sketchy outlines of how wonderful everything is going to be.

Simple minds like mine always try to simplify things so I can understand them. As I see it, the conflict boils down to: Do your needs as a human always, usually, sometimes, rarely or never come ahead of other species? My guess is that a poll would reveal a bell-shaped curve, closer to how an easy schoolteacher would have graded a class with more "A"s

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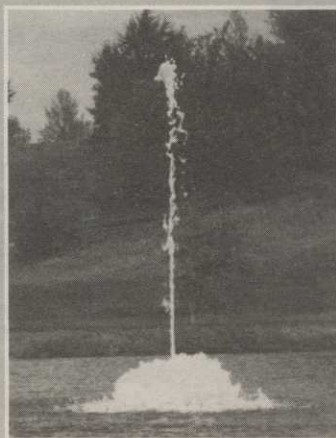
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Jarrell commentary

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than "F"s. The problem is that this kind of a poll has not been taken; that people will lie and distort the truth to achieve their goals; and that active minorities will achieve political success over silent or misinformed majorities.

As one who cares about the environment, it greatly disturbs me that a noble cause is being subverted by groups with hidden agendas, individuals seeking personal gain, hypocrites who ask others to make sacrifices they won't make themselves, and religious fanatics trying to impose their values on others.

America is a democracy, and people cannot be denied their choice of beliefs, but they must be given factual information upon which to vote their choices.

I happen to believe that wise-uses strategies based on good science are the mechanisms to satisfy the desires of a majority of our population, but I may be outnumbered. Most Americans who believe in protecting the environment are middle to upper class who are far removed from the natural resources they depend on for their high standard of living. Those who know the least about managing natural resources are those most critical of natural resource industries, and support environmental legislation no matter what the issue or the cost. They believe "environmentalists" over scientists by about 5 to 1.

It is estimated that we now spend about \$1.7 trillion annually for all environmental regulation, with costs continuing to escalate.

Can we afford to continue passing legislation on the basis that it might be good for the environment? I wonder how many of us really understand the economic implications of environmental legislation, or the precarious position our country will be in if we continue down this path?

I urge all superintendents and all members of the golf course industry to dig deeper into the environmental issues, learn what lies below the surface, and help educate your members. It is much more than your job that is at stake.

The new Woods nine on Mackinac Island was designed by Jerry Matthews, the outgoing president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, who does much of his work in Michigan.



Matthews' new nine on Mackinac blends with island's old-world feel

By KATHRYN A. CLARK

Something old. Something new. Golfers traveling to Michigan's Mackinac Island had better leave their automobiles behind. Motorized vehicles have been banned on the 2,200-acre island since the turn of the century, so transportation is by horseback, horse-drawn carriages, bicycle and by foot.

Yet, brand new to the historic resort area is a Jerry Matthews-designed nine-hole public course that opens this month.

Developed by Grand Hotel owner Dan Musser Jr., the Woods Golf Course is perched high on a limestone bluff, overlooking St. Ignace, the Straits of Mackinac and Mackinac Bridge. The hotel's first nine-hole course, The Jewel, was built in 1910 on land that once was the town's public cow pasture. A two-year renovation was completed on that track in 1987.

The first tee of the new Woods course is a 17-minute carriage ride from the 9th green of The Jewel.

Golf carts are available at both courses. The carts arrive by ferry

each spring. Each is harnessed to a horse to be pulled to the courses. (The carts actually motor under their own power. It just appears the horses are pulling them.)

The new nine, adjacent to the airport, is nestled among white pine, cedar, hemlock, white birch and maple trees.

Players will use three sets of tees, the longest yardage slightly more than 3,000 yards.

Matthews' layout required only minimal blasting, and that was to remove a seven-foot limestone ridge on the 4th hole. The course was carved out of rolling forested terrain, punctuated by numerous rocks and outcroppings that provide spectacular elevated rock tee areas and fairways accents.

A hill beside the cart path on the 5th hole has a historic British/American gun emplacement during the War of 1812.

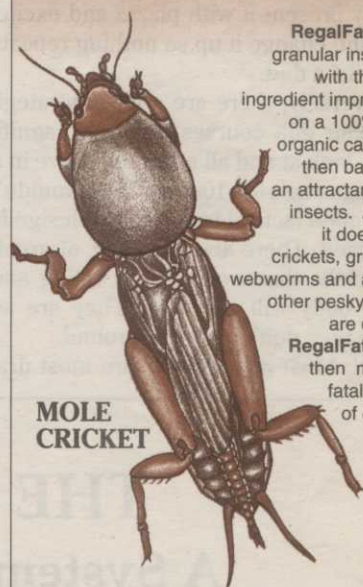
All construction equipment had to be transported to the island by ferry. According to Matthews, the difficult item was 900 yards of sand for the 30 bunkers.

DIRECTORY NOW AVAILABLE FROM GOLF COURSE BUILDERS

The Golf Course Builders Association of America has published its updated membership directory. The 128-page booklet contains names, addresses and descriptions of its member companies and the other Allied Associations of Golf, as well as an explanation of the GCBAA Builder Certification Program and a list of the 1994 Certified Golf Course Builders. A new feature in the directory is a seven-page construction reference section that contains measurement conversions and other useful construction information. Copies are \$10 each, and can be requested by contacting GCBAA headquarters, 920 Airport Road, Ste. 210, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514; phone 919-942-8922.

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