

# If well-conceived, golf can enhance California's coastal environment

By PETER DOUGLAS

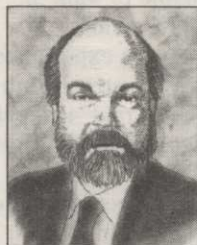
California's magnificent coast is a place of great beauty and natural diversity. It is a place where people come to live, work and play. An irresistible force, it invites competition among uses of land and attracts conflict. Because so little is left that has not been committed to some use, the struggle over open coastline areas that remain is fierce.

Land's edge has sung the siren's song since time immemorial. People go down to the seashore in great numbers

*Peter Douglas is executive director of the California Coastal Commission.*

for many things, including sport. And few sports derive so much fulfillment of experience from its setting as does golf. The degree of difficulty of a particular golf course is, obviously, but one component of its overall appeal to the user. Physical location is another. Anyone who has played or walked Pebble Beach knows what I mean.

Golf courses take up a lot of space and usually require substantial land-form alteration and, for those reasons alone, generate considerable controversy. Golf is not an "everyperson"



Peter Douglas

recreational activity and is viewed by many as exclusive. Reserving precious oceanfront acreage adjacent to public lands for this "exclusive" use raises serious land-use policy questions. Golf facilities may destroy natural habitat and raise concerns about impacts on natural and human communities from traffic, operations, fertilizers, herbicides and wildlife control practices. On the other hand, they have the potential to meet a wider variety of recreational needs, preserve open space, create new habitat values and, often, enhance the quality of life in

surrounding communities.

Since inception of California's comprehensive coastal protection program by voter initiative in 1972, the California Coastal Commission has approved numerous new golf courses along the coast. Proposed new golf facilities, like any other major new coastal land use, are subject to rigorous environmental review for consistency with policies in the California Coastal Act or Commission-approved Local Coastal Programs (LCPs). In some cases, local coastal permits are appealable to the Commission. An additional standard of review is offered by Coastal

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## FROM THE PUBLISHER

### Another banner year at Golf Course News: Thanks to our loyal readers & advertisers



Charles von Brecht, publisher

By CHARLES VON BRECHT

Welcome again to my yearly column.

This year I had to ask Editor Hal Phillips if I could brag a bit about the success of *Golf Course News* during this past year — and reminisce about the last few years and my upcoming move! Fortunately for me, Hal agreed and opened up the space for my few words to you.

First, some personal and company news: United Publications Inc., the parent company of *Golf Course News*, has requested that I move to headquarters in Yarmouth, Maine. This was not a huge surprise to me, as we've discussed it in the past. However, when it actually happens there will be some anxious moments.

Other than two and a half years in Chicago, I've made the Tampa Bay area my home for 22 years. In that time, I married here, watched daughters born, owned a couple homes, lost a lot of golf balls, and launched *Golf Course News*. Naturally, I have mixed emotions — more so than my wife and daughters — but we're ready to go. The house is on the market and, God willing, we'll be ensconced in the Yarmouth area by mid-summer.

Needless to say, I've done some planning for next winter and find there are many reasons to visit the South and West during those Maine winters.

On to business matters: You're now reading the largest ever issue of *Golf Course News*. We went over the 100-advertising-page mark, surpassing our previous high by nearly 20 pages. This is a milestone in the publishing business and it couldn't have happened without our loyal advertising clients who believed in the *Golf Course News* concept from the beginning.

Thanks to you all — and thanks to you, our readers, who spend valuable time reading the publication and responding to the advertising.

The year begins strongly, following a record year in 1994: 620 advertising pages, up 75 pages over the previous year... Okay, enough bragging.

GOLF COURSE NEWS

To you, all this means a better publication. We're reinvesting our dollars in more editorial staff. We hired J. Barry Mothes a few months ago to assist Hal, Mark Leslie and Peter Blais. Our ongoing circulation effort continues to track the whereabouts of our readers, who frequently change positions and locales.

There's investment in new ventures like Golf Course Expo, the nation's only trade show and conference specifically serving the public-access market. We've expanded the Asia-Pacific venture and, as always, continue to pay close attention to what interests our readers.

As we all ready ourselves for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America show and conference, I want to thank again all of our readers and advertising clients for the support which has nurtured our success over the past six years. I look forward to many more.

Please stop by the Golf Course News booth (#2514-16) and say hello in San Francisco. See you soon!

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As you may have read on pages 1 and 3 this month, the 381 new course openings and expansions set the stage for business opportunities for our readers and advertising clients. Furthermore, the 700-plus courses in planning or under construction should keep the business strong into the next decade.

One segment of the market which is not tracked — to my knowledge — is course renovation. The Golf Course News Development Letter tracks all U.S. golf projects in the planning stages — new, expansion and renovation. But wouldn't it be useful to know exclusively which courses are spending \$500,000 to \$2 million and up on major renovations? And how much *per annum* dollar volume does renovation really generate?

Let me hear your thoughts on whether this is an important segment of the market, and how we might track these renovation projects.

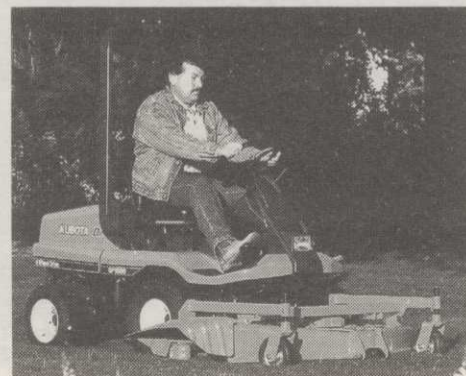
Ed. *There's always editorial space for you, Charlie! But while we're on the subject, the staff here in frigid Maine would like to take this opportunity to publicly welcome you to the North Country.*

## STEP ON IT



Kubota's GF1800 diesel front mower delivers more power with its easily engaged Foot-Control-4WD. This "on demand" 4WD locks in on-the-go by simply pressing a pedal.

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## Phillips commentary

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A word of caution, reiterating a point from Peter Blais' front-page story on the GOP-controlled Congress. Agencies like Environmental Protection and Land Management will play key roles for the Clinton Administration, as it tries to make political hay-making end runs around Gingrich & Co. Agencies are not subject to Congressional oversight, as anyone in the Reagan and Bush administrations will tell you...

...

San Francisco is one of my all-time favorite cities. Three quick suggestions on where to enjoy some atmosphere and perhaps a libation: **Vesuvio's** on Columbus, right next to City

Lights book store, provides a bar experience you won't soon forget. Emphasis on the funky here. Great beer selection, throwback decor, and just about anybody is liable to walk in. Bring your own Whole Earth Catalog.

For the more traditional tavern experience, try **Tosca**, located just down the street from Vesuvio's, also on Columbus. A real '40s-style long bar. Edward G. Robinson would be right at home here.

If you have a car and feel like getting out of the city, sample the **Pelican Inn** in Muir Beach. Located across the Golden Gate Bridge in Marin County, The Pelican is a beautiful country inn with a genuine British-style pub attached, complete with darts and short stools. Further, the food served in the dining room is first-rate and reasonable.

## Douglas: Golf and the Calif. Coast

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Act public-access policies.

When a new golf course is proposed for a coastal location, the threshold question is the appropriateness of the land use and its compatibility with surrounding uses. Once these questions has been answered; other, more project-specific concerns must be addressed. Based on our experience, golf courses designed in an environmentally sensitive manner are much less likely to raise significant Coastal Act

problems. Early consultation with local government and Commission staff, before a design is fixed, most often yields timely identification and resolution of potential problems. The Commission, to the extent its limited staffing resources allow, is committed to and encourages such consultation.

Although each project is unique and raises different concerns, some basic principles of design can facilitate coastal development permit approval.

- Select a suitable location that minimizes potential conflicts with surrounding uses and underlying existing uses such as agriculture. Respect urban-rural limit lines and avoid use of prime agricultural lands.

- Maximize opportunities for public access across, around and along the project. A recently approved golf course in Santa Barbara County (the ARCO project) and the Links at Spanish Bay in Del Monte Forest — both Commission-approved projects — are good examples of this principle.

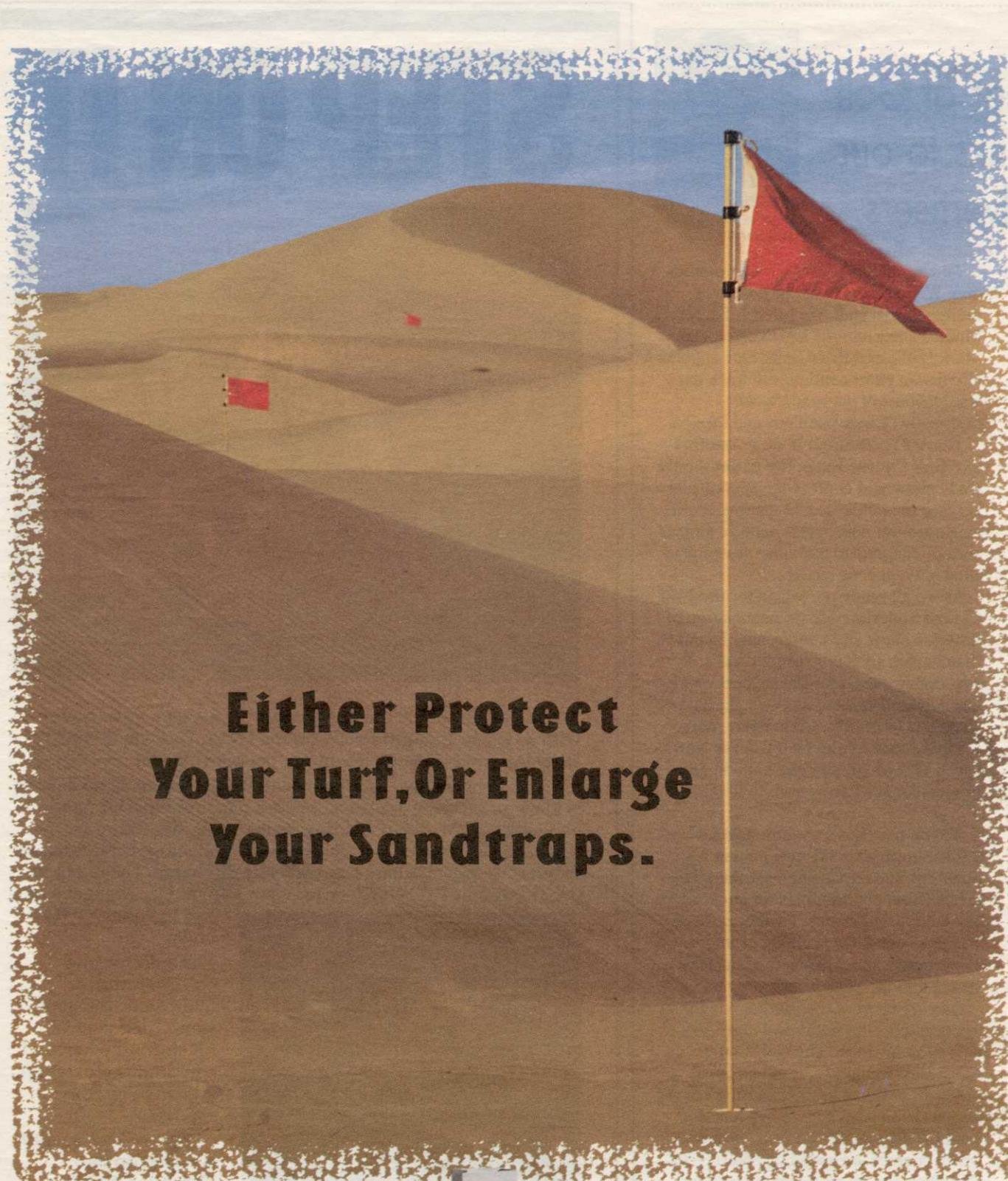
- To the maximum extent feasible, let nature guide the design. Natural features such as tree cover, streams and ponds, and sand dunes, should be preserved to the extent possible and land-form alteration should be minimized. Environmentally sensitive habitat areas should not be disturbed.

- Habitat values should be preserved, mitigated and/or enhanced. Project design should take into account wildlife corridors, feeding, breeding, nesting and roosting areas and the benefits of using native plants. The Links at Spanish Bay again provide a good example.

- Issues relating to water supply and quality must be addressed. The use of reclaimed water is desirable and project design should minimize dependence on potentially polluting chemicals.

- Provisions to protect the land in perpetuity from subdivision or conversion to other types of development in the future are also important. The ARCO project was approved by the Commission in large part because such a provision was incorporated into the project.

Careful, creatively designed and managed golf course projects can be both environmentally beneficial and economically rewarding. The Commission staff stands ready to help project developers meet those goals in a way that has enduring value for all those who cherish the California Coast.



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