

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

THE NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

A UNITED PUBLICATION  
VOLUME 6, NUMBER 1  
JANUARY 1995 • \$4.50

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#### PALMER KICKS OFF EXPO

Arnold Palmer addresses attendees at the inaugural Golf Course Expo, which drew 1,500 public-access decision-makers to Orlando, Fla. For a complete rundown on the show and conference, see pages 10 and 62.

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## USGA, wildlife groups cooperate on research

By MARK LESLIE

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Extensive research investigating golf courses as ecosystems will be undertaken as early as this fall, thanks to funding from the U.S. Golf Association (USGA) and enthusiastic support from several environmental organizations.

After a meeting here with environmentalists, Ron Dodson, president of the Audubon Society of New York and chairman of the USGA Wildlife Subcommittee, said: "The col-

lective agreement of all those attending was that instead of spending so much time looking at particular species, we should be looking at golf courses as ecosystems.

"And we should focus our attention on ecosystems where there are many golf courses and lots of potential for new courses to be built — like Florida, California, New England and the coastal mid-Atlantic region."

Enthusiased by the input

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## Summit illustrates need for image-building PR campaign

By HAL PHILLIPS

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — The recent Golf Summit yielded this stark realization: Poor public image stands as the single largest hindrance to golf industry growth.

If image isn't everything, it's darn close. Many still consider golf a pastime of rich, white males. Whether this assessment is less accurate than it was in, say, 1970, is irrelevant. The public at large has this perception, and it's particularly damaging because it adversely affects golf's other two major obstacles: the environment and player development.

This became crystal clear during Golf Summit '94, the two-day strategy session sponsored by the National Golf Foundation (NGF) here in November. In response, Summit attendees agreed that golf

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Joseph Beditz



Pinehurst Plantation is one of the private clubs in the Golf Communities USA portfolio.

## Golf Communities USA bucks public trend

By PETER BLAIS

ORLANDO, Fla. — Golf Communities USA President Warren Stanchina has always run against the tide.

When everyone was building private golf course communities in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Stanchina was buying and selling daily-fee facilities. "I usually made money," said the head of the Orlando, Fla.-based firm.

Now it's the 1990s. The consensus is that daily-fee developers are the

king and private course developers the jesters. While some may view Stanchina's recent purchases of several high-profile private course communities as the acts of a fool, he plans on laughing all the way to the bank.

"The United States is fast becoming a two-class country, the rich and the poor," he said. "That's why affordable, private courses will boom in the late 1990s. There are simply too many up-

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## The Ratings Game

What's fair, and has it affected design?

By MARK LESLIE

The good, the bad and the ugly. The dramatic and the costly. The bells and whistles — and foghorns. Golf course rankings have helped create them all.

"We accept some of the credit for elevating standards of golf architecture — which is good for the game and the business — and some of the blame for the escalating costs of architecture and, therefore, golf," said *Golf Digest* rating guru Ron Whitten.

"A lot of courses are built to make a great initial impression," said *Golf* magazine rating coordinator Tom Doak, himself a course architect. "Unfortunately, the surge of popularity of rankings has tended to obscure [the fact that] a golf course is not built so someone goes there once. Does the course have lasting value? Is it going to be better to play the 10th time than the first? Or is it going to get old really fast?"

The consensus is that the mere existence of the *Golf*, *Golf Digest* and other course rankings has meant more competition between architects — and devel-

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Should  
Conditioning  
Be Judged? p. 44

Mark Leslie photo



# Environmentalists line up in support of ecosystem research proposal

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and support at the meeting, the USGA Green Section hopes this spring to send out requests for proposals for the research.

The environmental community was "surprised and excited" by the prospects of the \$300,000 the golf association has set aside for the research, said USGA Green Section National Director Jim Snow.

"They were very enthusiastic," Snow said. "They were surprised at the extent of

the program. Without exception, they said how great they thought it was that we were doing this, and they would do whatever they could to help provide information or work with the project.

"One of them even said, 'If you continue to do this kind of work and work with groups like ours, you will get people on your side. They were very positive. It makes it worth our while to get others [in the golf industry] participating in it, too.'"

The meeting "established a

solid foundation for not only the research aspects we're interested in, but also the communication and educational facets," said Dodson, whose New York Audubon initiated the Wildlife Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses that has spread throughout the country.

The USGA has set aside \$100,000 a year for the next three years, and held the meeting to discuss how best to spend the funds.

Represented were the

Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit (associated with Clemson University); National Wildlife Federation; Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Program; Florida Audubon Society; Wildlife Conservation Society; the Department of Biology with Tabor College in Kansas; the Bronx Zoo; the Ecology Unit of European Golf Association, by David Stubbs; Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), by Dr. Jeff Nuss; and

the USGA, by Snow, Dr. Mike Kenna and Dr. Kimberly Erusha, and Research Committee members Dr. Victor Gibeault of University of California-Riverside and Dr. Charles Peacock of North Carolina State. Also participating were superintendent Charles Passios of Hyannis, Mass.; ClubCorp's Michael Quimbey; and Jeff Froke, the land resource manager with Rancho San Carlos in California.

"It shows good cooperation between the environmental associations and the golf course industry," said Erusha, the USGA's director of technical communications. "And it shows a lot of potential for the future — for not only cooperating on the projects but also working toward getting additional information."

"We worked up eco-regions, and then took collective information on the habitat and the important ecosystem relationships between, for example, a managed fairway and a wetlands system," Dodson said. "We collectively agreed the area between a functioning wetland and a turfgrass area is an important component of a golf course to study, and we should be looking at the cause-and-effect relationships between managing a golf course for golf and the functioning of a wetland from a biological point of view."

The end process would document what is actually going on in a wetland and turfgrass environment, and establish management criteria that can be used for future design and management activities on golf courses."

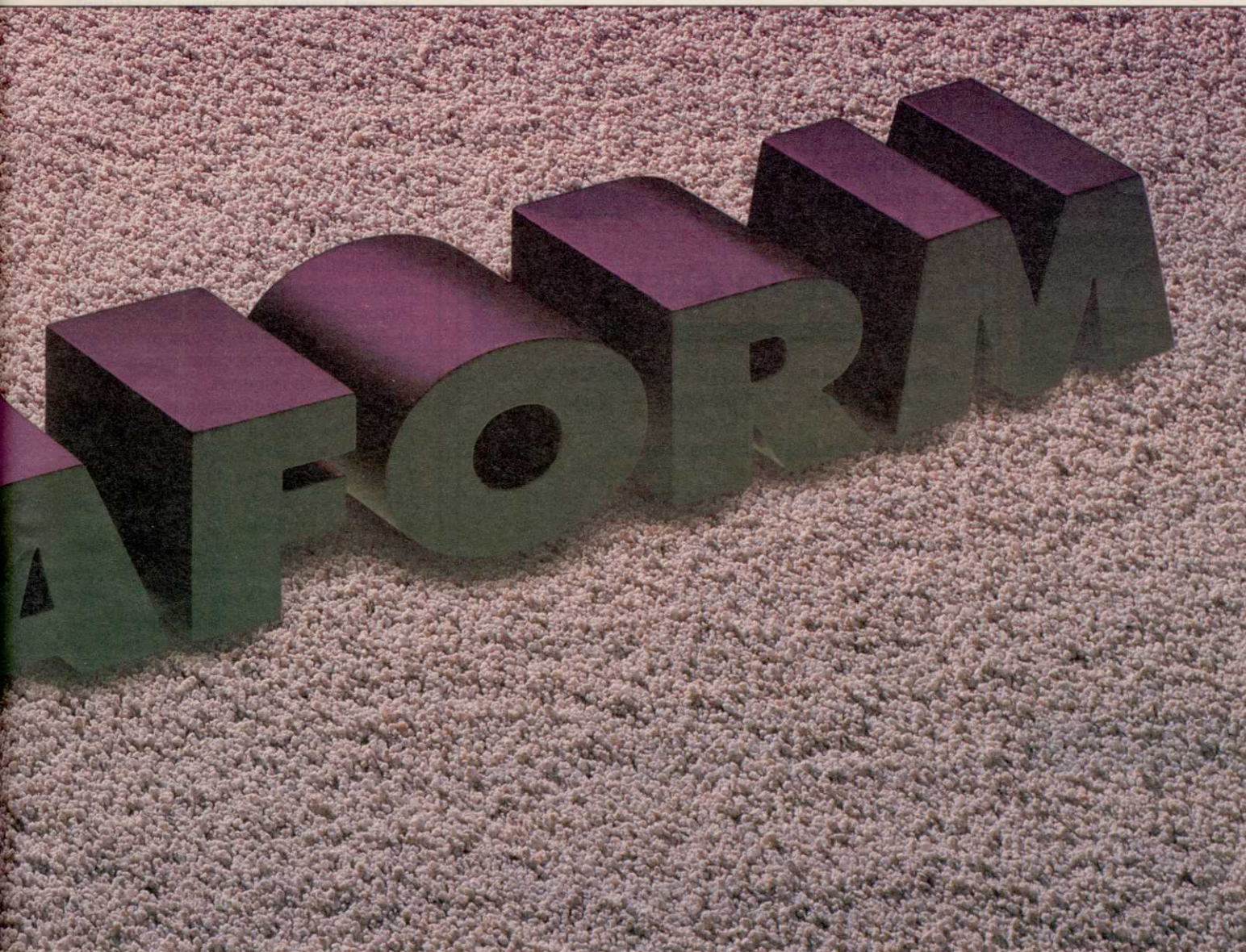
Snow said the number of projects that will be funded depends partly on the kinds and costs of projects proposed — and whether other golf industry organizations join in the funding.

"If a bunch of projects cost \$5,000 to \$10,000, then we can do many more than if they cost \$30,000 or \$40,000," he said. "We're also hoping the GCSAA, PGA and other allied associations will help. They have expressed interest in this for awhile now. We haven't asked them for money outright yet."

The USGA funds would serve as seed money in a restricted fund, which could include donations from the various other organizations, manufacturers and individuals.

"It is partly to show the whole industry supports wildlife research — not just the USGA," Snow said. "I think that's important. If others do join, we will call it an allied golf wildlife program."

Snow said he will be negotiating with another organization to coordinate the program. Requests for Proposals most likely will be publicized sometime this spring, he said.



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