

Communication cited as No. 1 issue in renovations

WOODSTOCK, N.H. — Superintendents' roles vary dramatically during renovation projects, but "the most important responsibility shared by all is communication," according to Marvin Armstrong.

Armstrong, a golf course architect from Franconia, told a joint meeting of Maine and New Hampshire superintendents at Jack-o-Lantern Resort here:

"The essence of any project is communication. Plans and specifications are the architect's tools for communicating with the contractor. The superintendent can

use these and other tools to keep players or members and particularly pro shop staff informed."

The pro shop staff has "the greatest opportunity to discuss the course with players and members," he said. "If they understand and are happy with the plans, there's a better chance the project will be successful."

The size and type of project can influence the scope of the contract documents required and the extent of the superintendent's involvement, Armstrong said.

However, although "municipal jobs require the most extensive documents," they sometimes remove the superintendent entirely from responsibility, he added.

"The other end of the scale might be a privately owned course that would do much of the work themselves and 'sub-out' shaping or other tasks which they lack skills or equipment to do. Most often, the superintendent is asked to be the owner's representative and the general contractor or coordinator of the entire work," he said.

Endangered NTEP draws support

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also gains stature by being located at the largest agricultural center in the world, Morris said.

"Could we do this work somewhere else?" he asked. "Probably. Would it be as effective? I don't know. Are we going to go out of business because of this? No, probably not, because there is a need for what we do. But leaving here would be a major disruption."

Morris is considering other options for his offices and turf testing plots. But he does not like the prospect of moving to, say, a university.

"We could go to a university," he said, "but we pay universities to do work for us. Universities are very competitive and I don't know how it would work to have a group associated with a university paying other universities."

Meanwhile, "the House or Senate could restore [the cut]," said Dan Domingo, budget development branch chief for the ARS here. "It's just a proposal to fund some of our high-priority research we have in the agency."

"We are asking for increased research in food safety, genetic resources and biodiversity, biological control of pesticides in soil biology, waste management and IPM [Integrated Pest Management], trying to find alternatives to methyl bromide, increase work in integrated farming systems..."

"I question why we didn't fit into IPM," said Morris, explaining that NTEP's testing of turfgrasses greatly affects plant maintenance practices.

"My justification is the bigger picture," he added. "The turfgrass industry is a \$30-\$35 billion-a-year industry and they think so little of it that they've reduced the funding to a proposed zero in 1997. It doesn't make sense. We have at least 50,000 square feet of brand-new, state-of-the-art greenhouse space built with joint funding from the USDA and the green industry."

"More than 30 people here are working on crops and ornamentals. They're here because the USDA thinks they are important. We don't have one turfgrass person in all of USDA."

Domingo could not corroborate the number of USDA crop and ornamental researchers, but did say: "When this project was proposed for termination, the topic of the importance of the turfgrass industry was not discussed. It is not a question of whether turfgrass is important. We feel the federation [NTEP] has the ability to assume these costs now."

The USDA has received "a lot of pressure" to restore support to NTEP, Domingo said. "We have answered a lot of letters. Those letters have been forwarded to the House and Senate, who will have to make the decision."

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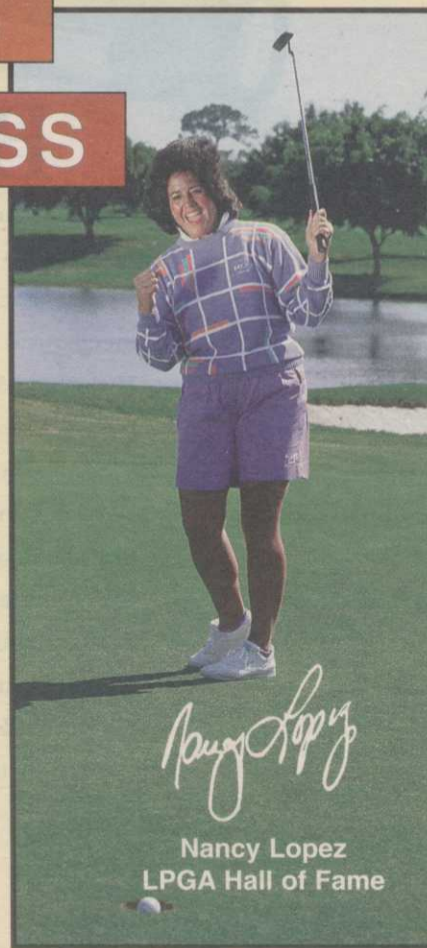
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