

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

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## New USGA service targets construction

By PETER BLAIS

FAR HILLS, N.J. — The U.S. Golf Association (USGA) Green Section will launch its new Construction Education Program next month with Mid-Continent Regional Director Jim Moore as director. Moore is developing materials, web site and seminar programs that will be available at minimal charge to developers, superintendents, course owners, club managers, golf professionals and others involved in building golf projects.



Jim Moore

"We know that many of the physical problems golf courses experience after opening occur because of things that were or weren't done when the course was originally built," Moore explained. "We want to be involved up front providing good information for

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Super Casey Crittenden at newly certified Beatrice (Neb.) CC.

Audubon  
beat goes on  
See page 20

## NTEP funding survives; Morris credits lobbying

By MARK LESLIE

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The embattled National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) received good news from Congress in August when the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate passed an agri-

cultural appropriations bill that included — even added to — NTEP funding.

NTEP operates as an independent agent under the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but the USDA had proposed redirecting its entire NTEP funding to other research.

Citing effective lobbying from the \$30-billion turfgrass industry, NTEP National Director Kevin Morris said lawmakers actually increased the funding \$5,000 to \$55,000.

"We got a tremendous response from the letter I sent out [asking for industry support]," Morris said. "The Turfgrass Producers International and Golf Course Superintendents Association of America lobbied on our behalf at the Congressional level. It pushed the key congressmen. And that was really helpful."

Happy at the turn of events, Morris is nonetheless

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### WATERWORLD EAST

Man-made water features rival their natural counterparts at the Clyde Johnston-designed River Landing Country Club, a newly-opened club north of Wilmington, N.C. For story, see page 34.

## Pebble Beach courses seek solutions to salty effluent

By J. BARRY MOTHES

MONTEREY, Calif. — Relief may be on the way for anxious superintendents at seven Monterey Peninsula golf courses.

Since last fall, the group has struggled with discoloration, wilting and disease

on their greens caused by a higher concentration of salt in the reclaimed water now being used as part of a highly publicized recycled-water project. Putting surfaces at the seven, high-profile sites are annual bluegrass (*poa annua*), which has proved to be the best turf to cope with the peninsula's cool, foggy climate. But *poa annua* is also very sensitive to salt.

A definitive course of action is expected to be taken by the end of this month, after an engineer-

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### FORUM PREVIEW

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Nowhere is this impact more evident than in customer service where upscale, daily-fee facilities operated by hospitality-trained professionals have upped the ante on their privately run, public-access competitors.

"What golf management companies have recognized is that we're in the hospitality business — like hotels are in the hospitality business," said Gregg Gagliardi, general manager and PGA pro at Lansbrook Golf Club in Palm Harbor, Fla. "The golf industry has never been known as a very high-service business,

Continued on page 44

## Priority One: Putting the customer first

By HAL PHILLIPS

CHICAGO — While management companies own or operate only 5 percent of the nation's golf course stock, their impact is felt throughout the industry.

## Pebble Beach

Continued from page 1

ing group issues a draft report recommending 14 strategies for fighting the salt-content problem.

According to Curtis Weeks, a project manager for Parsons Engineering Science — a firm closely involved in the study and drafting of the report — the possibilities range from reverse osmosis, electrodialysis and other technical desalination procedures to the development of new turfs. More drastically, putting surfaces could be rebuilt at the older courses which have “push-up” style greens built on clay that drain poorly compared to modern, sand-based greens. It’s also possible the courses could revert to using only potable water on the greens.

Weeks, who has been involved in the Pebble Beach recycled water project since 1987, said a process like reverse osmosis could cost between \$3 and \$5 million while piping potable water to the greens at all courses would cost roughly \$1 million. The cost of rebuilding a green, he said, is about \$30,000 per putting surface.

The salt problems, even if they prove temporary, are not being taken lightly at Pebble Beach (built in 1919), Cypress Point (1928), Spyglass (1966), Poppy Hills (1986), The Links at Spanish Bay (1987) and the 36-hole Monterey Peninsula Country Club (1926, 1961). Many of these courses are among the most famous and expensive in the world, where expectations persist for near-perfect course conditions.

“From a golf standpoint, it’s a pretty grave concern,” said Bob Zoller, superintendent at the 36-hole Monterey Peninsula CC and chairman of an oversight committee working with the reclaimed water project. “To us, the accumulation of salts in the soil is a potentially serious problem. Everybody’s been very careful and prudent. Everybody’s doing a lot of testing and trying to anticipate the problems.”

Part of the challenge facing the study committee — and the superintendents — is each of the seven courses on the peninsula have different characteristics which may require different solutions. Some courses are in or near wooded areas, some in wide-open areas. Some courses have sand-based greens, others have clay. Yet, for now, each course is on the same pipeline, receiving the same recycled water.

The salt saga goes back to the fall of 1994, when seven Monterey Peninsula courses began using recycled water as part of a \$34 million recycled water project. The Pebble Beach Co. — the largest employer in the county and subsidiary of several Japanese companies that own the Pebble Beach resort — financed the ambitious project. The goal, in part, was to greatly decrease the reliance on local potable water — always an issue in California and other western regions. In doing so, the courses, and especially the Pebble Beach Co., would build good will in the community.

But turf problems surfaced last fall. The peninsula received less-than normal rainfall in September, October and November of 1995. Superintendents started noticing discoloration and other signs of stress on their greens. By November of last year, superintendents were voicing their concerns to the groups providing the water, namely the Carmel Area Wastewater District and the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District.

“Contractually we’re tied to the same cost for using reclaimed water as potable water,” said Zoller. “At Monterey [Penin-

sula CC] we spend about \$250,000 a year on water. That’s a lot of money. We’re paying a quarter million dollars for something that’s having a detrimental effect on our turf.”

According to Ray von Dohren of the Carmel Area Wastewater District, the sodium level in the recycled water used by the courses ranges between 50 and 150 parts per million, a relatively low concentration that doesn’t bother fairways or other vegetation it irrigates. But bluegrass can be affected by about water with 75 parts per million sodium, said von Dohren. The water previously used on the golf courses — purchased from the California-American Water Co. — averages 51 parts per million sodium, according to a Cal-Am spokesperson.

Ironically, the greens are being adversely

affected by water that is cleaner than drinking water in some parts of California.

“The type of water we have would be fine for most golf courses around the country,” added von Dohren.

As a short-term fix, the Carmel Area Wastewater District has already invested \$150,000 to inject gypsum into the recycled water. Gypsum, which is calcium sulfate, can carry the sodium through the shallow root zone of bluegrass and keep excess sodium from getting into the grass plant, according to von Dohren. Weeks said his group has been conducting frequent tests and even though the results aren’t definitive, he said, “I know the SAR (salt absorption ratio) is down, based on the calcium we’re adding.” Weeks said the gypsum injection will probably end

up being the first step in a “staged approach” to deal with the problems.

Further, under contract terms set more than two years ago, the golf courses are allowed to use potable water for five to seven days at a time, if needed. Many courses have been doing so this summer to stem the problems. But while they wait for an engineering draft report — and a final plan by the end of this month — Zoller and other superintendents are concerned the problems could get far worse if the Monterey region suffers another multi-year drought, as it did in the late 1980s.

“If that happens the greens will never get flushed properly,” said Zoller. “We assume that could lead to very serious problems. And if that happens, it would be resume-printing time.”

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