

Non-profit formed to protect water rights in Arizona's stingy supply

By PETER BLAIS

PHOENIX — Protecting the Arizona golf industry's water rights is one of the main purposes of the Golf Industry Association (GIA), a new non-profit corporation formed to preserve the quality and promote the growth of the game across the state.

"There is a significant need for this type of united advocacy on behalf of the game of golf," said Tom Patrick, president of the GIA and vice president of Phoenix-based SunCor Resort and Golf Management.

"Over the years, golf has made tremendous contributions to our quality of life in Arizona. However, recently many legislative and regulatory issues have arisen which could adversely affect all levels of our industry as well as the spirit of the game."

Many of those legislative and regulatory issues have revolved around water. Strict regulations limit the amount of irrigated turf on Arizona courses, Patrick noted. However, a recent University of Arizona study indicates that traditional

formulas for estimating golf course water use may be faulty.

"The study indicates we need to look at increasing golf course allocations," the GIA president said. "The test plots used to estimate water use don't take into account the edge effect of having golf courses border the desert. On a golf course, there's nothing to stop the

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WATERING HOLE

With Camelback Mountain at their backs and water hazards ahead, golfers negotiate the third hole of The Phoenician's Desert Nine, the new Ted Robinson-designed layout at the Scottsdale, Ariz. resort. The original Phoenician resort opened with 18 Homer Flint-designed holes in 1988. The new nine opened last April. ITT Sheraton Corp. of Boston owns and manages the facility. The Phoenician and other Arizona courses should benefit from the non-profit Golf Industry Association formed recently to champion water rights and other issues of concern to the state's many golf facilities.

Pebble Beach effluent study ready to go

By J. BARRY MOTHES

MONTEREY, Calif. — A critical, long-term "demonstration trial" to study the effects of reclaimed water on annual bluegrass putting greens — like those at Pebble Beach and several other well-known Monterey Peninsula golf courses here — will start by the end of this month.

Over the next few weeks, 28, 15-by-15-foot field plots will be installed near the 11th and 12th holes at the Pebble Beach Golf Links. Each plot will have different combinations of grass types, soil mixes and construction styles and will be irrigated with reclaimed water. A main goal of the trial will center on finding ways for peninsula superintendents to maintain world-class putting surfaces while using water with a salt content that has proved troublesome.

"There are all sorts of things that people don't know about using reclaimed water on golf courses that get lots of traffic and use low-mowing heights," said Mark Mahady, an agronomic consultant based in Carmel Valley, Calif., who is leading the study. "We think this study will help us figure that out."

The reclaimed water research project was developed in the wake of problems on putting greens at seven Monterey Peninsula golf courses. In 1994, a \$34 million recycled water project was launched by the Pebble Beach Co., whose courses started using reclaimed water to irrigate its tees, fairways and greens. Within a year, however, superintendents started noticing discoloration, wilting and disease on their greens.

The problems have been linked in part

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Arizona group will address alternative water-use regulations

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desert from siphoning off irrigation water. But the test plots usually don't take this into consideration."

The state has also failed to provide incentives for the golf industry to use effluent, Patrick said. Golf courses are often seen as a way for the state's growing cities to rid themselves of their resulting wastewater. And yet, there is little incentive for golf courses to install the expensive piping infrastructure to transport effluent to the site or suffer through the maintenance headaches of using the salt-laden water.

"We need to develop alternative water-use regulations so that using effluent doesn't count against a course's water allotment," Patrick said. "Using effluent doesn't increase the water available to the course, so why not just use ground water."

The GIA will focus its efforts on effectively communicating the concerns, opinions, and benefits of the golf industry to the state legislature, regulatory agencies, communities and citizens.

"The public's perception of golf as a water user is not always a good one," Patrick said. "We're very visible because of the sprinkler systems. Agriculture uses much more water, but it's a case of out of sight, out of mind."

Several years ago, a University of Arizona study reported golf contributed \$2 billion annually to the state's economy, Patrick said. The state Department of Commerce and the golf industry are undertaking an updated study that Patrick expects will show golf's impact is several times the \$2 billion figure.

"People come to Arizona to play golf," the GIA president said. "Eleven new courses opened in the Phoenix area last year and another eight to 10 are under construction. Each course needs to host 40,000 rounds a year to make the project work. And then there are the resort communities that grow up around the courses that need golf in order to survive."

Although it is part of the state's second-largest industry, tourism, golf has never had an organization that looks out for its interests in the legislature. "It's always been a last-minute scramble to react to something that affected golf," Patrick said. "This [GIA] is an attempt for us to be more pro-active regarding water, taxation and other issues, rather than just waiting for the phone call to tell us something is coming down."

In addition to SunCor's Patrick,

initial GIA board members include representatives from the Arizona Golf Association, Raven Golf, Robson Communities, Resort Suites of Scottsdale, Recreation Centers of Sun City West, Communication Links, John Jacobs,



Tom Patrick

American Golf Corporation, In Celebration of Golf, The Lyle Anderson Co., The 500 Club, Grayhawk Development, Paradise Valley Country Club, Troon Golf, Cobblestone Golf Group, The Masters Group, and

McCormick Ranch Golf Club. Major suppliers such as Toro, ClubCar and E-Z-GO have also backed the group, Patrick added.

"We have the nucleus of an outstanding organization," he added. "Everyone is committed to serving the golf industry and the state of Arizona as best we can. But we need more help.

Ideally, we'd like to attract 100-percent participation from those directly involved in the industry. However, we also welcome the support and viewpoints of anyone who has an interest in helping maintain the health of the Arizona golf community."

For more information about the GIA, contact 602-285-6874.

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