

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

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**A NATIVE SON**  
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NEWSPAPER

## Geologists examine Ocean Trails; future unsure

By ANDREW OVERBECK

RANCHO PALOS VERDES, Calif. — In the weeks since the landslide at the Ocean Trails Golf Course here, geologists are still examining the geological substructure beneath the golf course to determine what exactly caused a 200-by 400-foot section of the 18th hole to slip towards the Pacific Ocean. However, the largest earth movement to hit the Palos Verdes Peninsula since the Portuguese Bend landslide in the mid-1950s, has unsettled more than just a fairway and a green complex. Environmental activists, regulatory bodies, planning commissions and even other golf course

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## Drought plagues East Coast

*I just got back from New Jersey. You've got to feel for the superintendents down there. It's been so dry, even the weeds are brown.'*

— Scott Cybulski, superintendent, Falmouth (Maine) CC

By PETER BLAIS

Scott Cybulski's sympathy for his fellow superintendents is well placed, according to Stan Zontek, agronomist for the United States Golf Association Green Section's Mid-Atlantic region.

During his travels throughout his five-state area — Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia and West Virginia — Zontek has witnessed the effects of what some are calling the worst drought in the past 100 years.

"It's a notch above awful," Zontek said. "Today [Aug. 5], the state of Maryland imposed mandatory water restrictions. Watering of fairways is only allowed with syringe irrigation with an 80-percent reduction in water usage required. Greens and tees are limited to the minimum necessary.

"Delaware is on voluntary restric-

tions and will probably go into mandatory water restrictions by noon on Friday [Aug. 6] north of Wilmington.

"Pennsylvania went to mandatory water restrictions last week. They allow watering of tees and greens only and syringing to a maximum of 15 minutes a day to heat-sensitive grasses, which are defined as bentgrass and *poa annua* fairways. Any irrigation of sodded or seeded areas can only occur from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m., which isn't going to help for sodding or seeding.

"In Maryland, they don't even allow that. No agricultural irrigation is allowed at all.

"West Virginia was just designated a drought emergency by the President. Virginia has voluntary restrictions, although in the far western corner of the state it's wet,

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### WALK, DON'T RIDE

Colleton River Plantation's Pete Dye Course hosts its grand opening in September, hailed as a cog in the trend towards walking and "core" golf courses, and full caddie service. Since the course's "soft opening" last Dec. 15, half the members have walked track, which stretches from 5,105 to 6,889 yards over Lowcountry property on Hilton Head Island, S.C. Above is the 135-yard 13th hole.

Mark Brown photo

## Golf Communities files for bankruptcy

By PETER BLAIS

ORLANDO, Fla. — Golf Communities of America, a publicly held Orlando-based course owner and operator that recently filed for bankruptcy court protection, hopes to submit a reorganization plan by early fall, according to R. Scott Shuker, an attorney representing GCA.

GCA and its 21 subsidiaries operate five active courses, have three courses in planning or under construction and own property in Florida, Texas, Utah and North Carolina. Among GCA's courses are Cutter Sound Golf & Yacht Club in Palm City, Fla.; Hillcrest Country Club (under con-

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**FOUGHT DESIGNING DOVE MNT. TRACK**

AURORA, Ore. — John Fought has been signed to a contract to design a 27-hole facility on an adjacent piece of property. The new course, Dove Mountain Resort, will include a golf school, training facility, 500-room Hyatt Hotel and mixed-use residential community. The Course at Dove Mountain Resort will be situated in a mildly undulating valley, with hundreds of specimen saguaro cacti and several 30-foot-deep washes. Cottonwood Properties is the owner/developer of Dove Mountain Resort.

**Drought plagues East Coast**

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like an oasis. The courses around Bristol are the first green courses I've seen in two months."

Most watering restrictions apply to courses whether they are on municipal water or have their own wells.

"The superintendents are irate," Zontek said. "You can have an impounded pond that doesn't rely on city water, streams or wells, and it doesn't matter. You're still under the same restrictions."

In addition to brown grass, the drought has led most courses to restrict golf carts to cart paths and/or roughs. But despite the inconveniences, Zontek said golfers have been extremely understanding of the superintendents' dilemma.

"You walk out in the sun and your yard is all burned up, it doesn't take a superior intellect to understand the problem," Zontek said.

According to Zontek, it's too early to tell what long-term problems could arise from

*The superintendents are irate. You can have an impounded pond that doesn't rely on city water, streams or wells, and it doesn't matter.'*

— Stan Zontek  
USGA Green Section

the prolonged dry spell. "Cool-season grasses have a very efficient dormancy cycle under drought stress," he said. "The grass may look white, but if you get rainfall for recovery, it will pop back just fine. High-traffic areas are the problem.

"The second major effect will be on trees. The ground is powder dry four feet down, and most tree roots are in the top three feet. They are losing leaves now. I'm seeing trees literally wilting. That's sayonara. Arborists say it takes up to five years to see the effects of a drought on trees. So that's where the greatest long-term effect is likely to be.

"The bent and poa annua greens are taking it on the chin. Anthracnose is out there... There definitely will be some re-seeding this fall."

Zontek said no courses have closed due to the drought. A course north of Philadelphia has turned to the tank trucks that supply water to swimming pools to water its greens, he said.

As of mid-August, there was no end in sight to the dry conditions. The tropical storms that spawn rain-laden, late-summer and early-fall hurricanes along the East Coast had yet to materialize.

"They had predicted nine hurricanes this year. So far there have been zero," Zontek said.

The drought will change how superintendents prepare their courses for winter.

"How can you aerate fairways, fertilize, overseed, or do your normal fall renovation without water?" Zontek said. "It's putting a lot of fall programs on hold. There was a course outside Baltimore that was going to convert from ryegrass to bentgrass fairways this year. That's got to be a big question mark now. It's making everyone pause and re-evaluate."

New Jersey has been the hardest hit state in the USGA's Northeast Region, according to Director David Oatis, who oversees New England, New York and New Jersey. Recently enacted statewide water restrictions state "Golf course greens and tees may be watered with sprinklers or other mechanical means from 9 p.m. to midnight and 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. Syringing is permitted for no more than 10 minutes for each green between noon and 3 p.m."

"I've heard about some major problems, but haven't really seen any catastrophes out there," said Oatis, noting that much of the damage occurred around July 4 when low humidities and high temperatures made it impossible to put down water fast enough to save some turf. "Courses have lost some shallow-rooted, weaker grasses. And there has been some pythium reported. But greens seem to be holding up. There hasn't been any widespread damage, yet."

A potential problem down the road could be gray leaf spot, Oatis said. "It's probably been to dry to germinate. But there could be a nasty outbreak coming. Gray leaf spot could just kill off the perennial ryegrass."

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