

GOLF COURSE NEWS

THE BUSINESS NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

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Laurence Hirsh assesses the current state of the golf market and finds reason for optimism.

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2002 NEWSMAKERS

First Nat'l sees rise in volume

By DEREK RICE

MARTINSVILLE, N.J. — Despite an economic downturn in 2002, First National of America Inc. has not seen a decrease in the number of golf course loans it has made, according to Jerry Sager, First National's president.



"Either we're dull and boring or incredibly wrong. We do about the same lending volume each year," he said. "We did a little more volume, surprisingly enough, this past year than the year before, and I know everybody else wasn't doing stuff."

Sager attributes this increased volume to First National's commitment to look at loans for projects on Native American land (GCN, April 2002), as well as the company's track record as a national lender for golf projects.

"We opened up a new lending market because we're doing Native American stuff now, which we did not do before. So that's

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2002 NEWSMAKERS

Drought concerns linger into winter



State water restrictions forbid the irrigation of roughs this summer at Dauphin Highlands Golf Course in Oberlin, Pa.

By ANDREW OVERBECK

WESTFIELD, N.J. — Moderate to extreme drought conditions gripped 45 percent of the country this summer, leading to widespread water restrictions and maintenance headaches for superintendents. While some areas have gotten relief from fall rains, water use is still being regulated in other parts of the country and concerns over long-term water shortages are looming large.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 29 states had significantly be-

low average precipitation and this year. This past June through August was the warmest since the 1930s.

"This was the hardest year I have ever had to maintain turf," said Chris Carson, superintendent at Echo Lake Country Club in Westfield, N.J.

Superintendent Bill Wall at Dauphin Highlands Golf Course in Oberlin, Pa., agreed. "The last two years have been the most difficult years I have had, and I have been in central Pennsylvania since 1975," he said.

Parts of Pennsylvania and all of

New Jersey were placed under water restrictions early this spring after an unusually dry winter.

"In March we had our water cut back to 50 percent of the

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2002 NEWSMAKERS

NGP buyout nearly done

By DEREK RICE

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — When National Golf Properties (NGP) announced in February that it would merge with its sister company and largest tenant American Golf Corp. (AGC), the immediate reaction was not positive. Many industry insiders claimed the deal was merely an attempt to bail out NGP's major shareholders and thought either bankruptcy or breaking up the company would be more appropriate.

After several months of negotiations and rumor-fueled speculation, NGP found a buyer in a group led by Goldman Sachs and Starwood Capital (GCN,

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2002 NEWSMAKERS

Bayer to sell fipronil product line to BASF

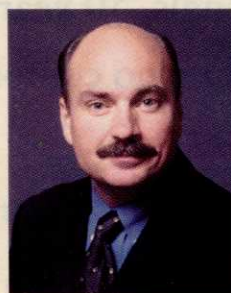
By ANDREW OVERBECK

MONTVALE, N.J. — BASF agreed Oct. 28 to buy certain assets including fipronil insecticides and several fungicides from Bayer AG, clearing the way for full regulatory approval of Bayer's acquisition of Aventis CropScience and the creation of Bayer Environmental Sciences. Officials from both companies would not discuss the specifics of the pending transaction.

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission granted approval to Bayer's acquisition of Aventis CropScience in June, but required the divesti-

ture of acetamiprid and fipronil to be completed by December (GCN, July 2002). The deal, worth a reported \$1.16 billion, would beat that deadline and includes buy-back license agreements that would allow Bayer ES to market certain products and retain trademarks. The FTC and the European Commission must still approve the transaction.

Dan Carrothers, head of the



Dan Carrothers

U.S. green industry business for Bayer ES, anticipates the deal to be completed by early December.

"Until that time, we are still operating under the FTC guidelines of 'hold separate,'" said Carrothers. "We

cannot fully integrate the sales force until the divestment has occurred."

While acetamiprid is being

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