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BEFORE, DURING OR AFTER

Why your course should go from its water source to one less expensive.

As the economy improves, the golf course restoration market is regaining life with many projects being planned and under construction. Along with these restorations are improvements to or the installation of new irrigation systems. The question becomes do you perform the irrigation system installation before, during or after the renovation? Each has its advantages and disadvantage, but the choice will be dependent on how much renovation work is being performed. On many projects, the irrigation work is worth more on a dollar-for-dollar basis than the renovation work. That said, is the project a new irrigation installation with some renovation work, or a renovation project with a new irrigation system? This not only dictates the philosophy of the project with the board, ownership or membership, but also dictates the contract holder and subcontractor.

The advantage of doing the irrigation work before the renovation is you have coverage in all the areas you need to regrow, which is probably not the case with the old system. This works well when the renovation is on a smaller scale, such as green regrassing or bunker and tee renovations. I've seen it done on large projects

where most of the irrigation system is installed first, and where major renovation are to be done, such as a green complex, when the new system is temporarily attached to the old irrigation and then replaced once the feature is renovated.

It makes sense to do the irrigation at that same time as the renovation. Careful coordination between the builder and the irrigation contractor needs is required, and many times this falls to the superintendent. For this reason, many people believe the irrigation and renovation should be done by one company, but there are hundreds of example projects where there were two different contractors and the projects were very successful. The renovations and the irrigation work may not be done at the same time based on a number of factors including priorities and course closures. Many times finances dictate the project's need to be spread out over two or more fiscal years.

Installing the irrigation system post-renovation is done much too often. Installing the irrigation after some period of time has elapsed risks the investment of the renovation. During the renovation there are areas that are sodded (bunker faces) or seeded and most likely there is no irrigation system to water it in. Large amounts of time

are spent hand watering and many areas may not grow in very well. It also lengthens the duration of construction, interfering with play.

Unfortunately, the decision to sequence the renovation and irrigation work is rarely the superintendent's. You may give your opinion, but you will need to remind the powers that be that it will be harder to water the renovated areas and the grow-in results may not be as good as anticipated if you have no irrigation. You also need to get the renovation architect as an ally to have irrigation available for the renovated work.

I prefer to have the irrigation installation and renovation work performed at the same time. If the irrigation system is worth more than the renovation work by more than 20 percent, then I like two separate bids. This works well on private projects, but not on public bids. On public projects there will be only one contractor and in most, but not all cases, the renovation contractor will be the general contractor, no matter what the value of the irrigation improvements. Many good renovation contractors do not do their own irrigation while many of the larger builders do. When bidding two separate packages (renovation and irrigation) those contractors who also do irrigation will bid both parts of the project and there should be some economies of scale.

What works for one golf course does not necessarily work for another. All stakeholders need to be involved in the process, including the board, greens committee, golf committee, irrigation consultant, golf course architect and of course the superintendent. GCI

“ The decision to **install irrigation improvements** or a new irrigation system before, during or after a renovation is one that requires a lot of thought and subsequent planning.

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