



## SUSTAINABLE COURSE MAKEOVER

The not-for-profit, Audubon Lifestyles is coordinating the project at the Scotland Yards Golf Club which is aimed at implementing a sustainable golf management demonstration project.

With the economy still in the doldrums, a group of business and non-profit organizations have come together with an 18-hole course in Florida to demonstrate that embracing and embedding the tenets of sustainability, regardless of the size and budget of the golf course, will provide economic viability and serve as the foundation upon which to deliver environmental and social benefits.

Audubon Lifestyles is coordinating the project at the Scotland Yards Golf Club, which is located between the small citrus towns of Zephyrhills and Dade City, and within easy driving distance of both Orlando and Tampa. Florida has been one of the states most impacted by the economic downturn, so it made perfect sense to their team to prove the potential to doubters of sustainability by implementing sustainable management practices on a golf facility in a location that has been hardest hit with tough times.

David Rinaldo, general manager of Scotland Yards, says, "The past several years has been a real challenge to the entire golf industry, and our course certainly hasn't been any exception."

The Rinaldo family built and opened the course in the 1970's and sold the course several years ago. But, as is often the case, that business transaction didn't work out and the Rinaldo's now found themselves reacquiring their old family course again.

"While we certainly care about the environment, if we can't maintain a financially viable business, we simply would not be able to continue to function," Rinaldo says. "We were very excited to learn about the benefits of operating more sustainably, and couldn't be happier to become involved as a demonstration project that showcases sustainability on golf courses."

Eric Dodson, executive director of Audubon Lifestyles, has pulled together a small, but growing group of businesses that have agreed to contribute their time, expertise, products and services to the project. "We hope that we can prove to other golf facility owners who may be struggling in this economy that it doesn't matter what how big or small your golf facility operating budget is – it just makes financial sense to embrace the sustainability opportunities that are available in the market right now," Dodson says.

Rinaldo has agreed to implement the recommended

actions developed through the project, and to document the results over time.

Bill Love and I have agreed to volunteer our time and services to the project. We are doing so as long as the main focus of the project is economically viable. To us this means "make more, spend less."

We believe adjustments can be made regarding the overall management of the golf course, which will not only reduce expenditures, but improve the quality of the golf course. With reduced expenditures and improved quality, we believe the course will see increased play. And of course, increased play means more income.

"We hope that we can prove to other golf facility owners who may be struggling in this economy that it doesn't matter what how big or small your golf facility operating budget is – it just makes financial sense to embrace the sustainability opportunities that are available in the market right now."

— Eric Dodson, Audubon Lifestyles

At present the organizations that have agreed to participate in the Sustainable Golf Management Demonstration Project at Scotland Yards Golf Club are: Audubon Lifestyles, serves as lead project coordinator; Love & Dodson, based in College Park, Md., will take the lead in the sustainable planning, design and development for the project; Turf Feeding Systems as a producer of fertigation systems based in Houston, Texas has agreed to donate a fertigation system, which was recently installed; The Dodson Group LLC will offer sustainability and environmental consulting, including mapping the entire course, and Trusty & Associates based in Council Bluffs, Iowa, will provide help with public relations. **GCI**

### FOR MORE INFORMATION...

If you, your business or organization is interested in joining the effort and become an active participant in the project at Scotland Yards please contact: Eric Dodson at: [edodson@audubonlifestyles.org](mailto:edodson@audubonlifestyles.org) or 727-733-0762

## The Chance to Plan

**PRO** Hosting can help bring about much needed changes to a course and facility. There will be immediate interest in providing the course with the best possible agronomic conditions so it can withstand the rigors of tournament preparation and execution. Clubs are selected three to five years in advance, during which time courses are prepped, repaired, and treated to the finest in turf grass playing conditions. Together with the host organization, the club will create a long-range plan to accommodate everything from rebuilding putting greens to adding course drainage, replacing bunker sand, and removing trees. This is the chance to make significant improvements to the course and club, and everything should be on the table for consideration.

**CON** The host club may receive little to no financial support from the host organization to meet its requirements, leaving the raising of funds to dues and assessments. Sadly, when major course-enhancement projects are left to the judgment of club officials few if any get accomplished. If they are pursued, it's generally at the last minute, placing heavy burdens on a staff trying to manage new projects along with their regular duties.

## Teamwork

**PRO** Nothing brings members and staff together like a big tournament. Which is good, because without that, the event will fail. Internal differences are aside for the common good. Outside experts bring different perspectives, which can be especially helpful to the club staff. At the top of the ladder, the club manager, professional, and superintendent are expected to rise to the occasion and shine.

**CON** Not everyone can take the pressure, and it's during the lead-up to a big event that members and staff get angry and leave. If the tournament occurs annually, like a Tour event, the staff is under extra stress because the merry-go-round never stops: They have to be thinking about the next event before the current one is done. If the event is successful, everyone is a hero. But if there's a problem, heads will roll. And not only on staff: The member who "wanted this mess in the first place"

“And as with most parties, after the guests go home, the host is left to clean up.”

## Putting Your Best Foot Forward

**PRO** It's fun to watch a golf course change personality, and to welcome players, celebrities, and fans. It's very satisfying to see your course and the work of your staff/volunteers showcased on television and other media, and to accept the thanks of the golf world. There is no greater feeling than the collective sigh of relief that comes when the victor hoists the trophy and the event concludes without any major headaches.

**CON** No major headaches? Are you crazy? Weather can turn the perfect golf course into a mud hole in minutes. Scores are higher or lower than expected, leaving the course – and grounds crew – open to criticism from media, players, even the host organization. (High-definition television leaves the superintendent nowhere to hide.) And as with most parties, after the guests go home, the host is left to clean up. Did you leave enough money in the budget for the post-event work? If yours is a private club, the day after the circus has left town the members will want to get back on their course – but with the same conditions the pros had last week, of course!

Fifty years ago, the then-executive director of the USGA, Joe Dey, wrote, “and what is the club's reward? Thousands upon thousands of man hours are expended by club committee members with no material compensation at all. There is really only one compensation – the same one which comes from any labor of love. For holding golf championship is a labor of love.”

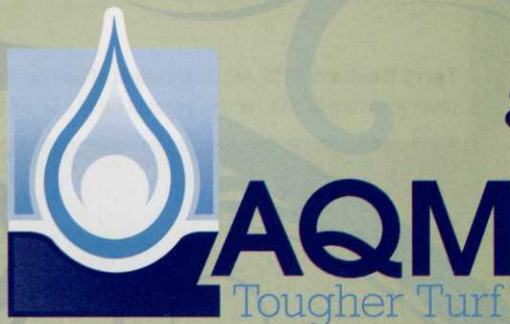
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**Terry Buchen**, CGCS, MG, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He's a 41-year, life member of the GCSAA. He can be reached at 757-561-7777 or [terrybuchen@earthlink.net](mailto:terrybuchen@earthlink.net).

## Travels With Terry

Globetrotting consulting agronomist Terry Buchen visits many golf courses annually with his digital camera in hand. He shares helpful ideas relating to maintenance equipment from the golf course superintendents he visits – as well as a few ideas of his own – with timely photos and captions that explore the changing world of golf course management.

### TOW VEHICLE HITCH

The 2012 Model 07273 Toro Workman MDX turf vehicle came equipped with a factory-mounted Category III Reese-type receiver without a hitch. An in-house hitch was built which extends outward approximately 16 inches and drops down 4 inches to keep the trailer level using 2 inch x 2 inch x ¼ inch square tubing that slides into the receiver. The remaining fabricated flat steel pieces are also ¼ inch thick. A ½-inch diameter hole was drilled into the hitch so that a lynch pin could slide in to hold the hitch in place. The hitches were welded together and then painted with a primer and a “Toro red” spray enamel. The Rubbermaid Model 6WU47 Trailer (15 cubic yard) navigates short curves easily, does not “jackknife” or hit the tailgate in any way because the hitch is far enough away from the tow vehicle. The cost for each hitch was less than \$30 after the R&D was completed and it took no more than 2 hours to build and paint each one. Brad Boyd, director of agronomy, Manuel Benitez, equipment manager, and Eliud Cruz, mechanic/fabricator, make up the team at the Dorado Beach Resort & Club in Dorado, Puerto Rico.



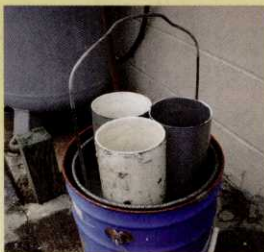
### CART PATH EDGER

The Dorado Beach Resort & Club in Dorado, Puerto Rico, has a 2005 Toro Sand Pro that has a modified cart path edging wheel. Two maintenance staff used to take about four days to edge the cart paths on 72 holes with trimmers, where it now takes one person 1½ days. The edging wheel blade can be raised, lowered & angled hydraulically, by using the lift handle that used to operate the rear rake mechanism, so that the proper position is achieved, especially when going around curves on the cart paths. Many of the hydraulic components were “cannibalized” from retired triplex mowers and the hoses & fittings are new that cost about \$50. The R&D took about three weeks after many field trials for proper refinement. For example, the front length of the Sand Pro had to be reduced because of the variable turning radius of the machine vs. the cutting wheel itself. The engine was also rebuilt in-house. The total labor cost about \$400. Brad Boyd is the director of agronomy; Eliud Cruz is the fabricator; and Manuel Benitez is the fleet manager. **GCI**



## REPAINTING CUPS

The art of re-painting metal putting green regulation cups is done efficiently first by soaking them in carburetor cleaner for about an hour in a soaking basket that holds three cups at a time. After they are clean and dry, paper cut-out discs are placed at the bottom of the cups so they remain unpainted. A plastic parts bin is then used, which holds nine cups, where they are painted with a high-grade enamel spray paint in a portable can. The parts bins are stackable so they can be stored neatly in the parts room. Zinc cups are easier to paint than the aluminum cups and they will last a lifetime. Eric Kulaas, equipment manager, at the Renaissance Vinoy Resort & Golf Club, St. Petersburg, Fla., came up with this great idea. Kulaas also painted a complete set of cups pink in color for a breast cancer charity golf tournament. It takes about 6-7 hours for the entire process for 18 cups and it costs less than \$50 for the carburetor cleaner and paint.



### Have you innovated a new contraption in your shop?

Have you tinkered with equipment so it better meets your needs. Share your best ideas by emailing them to [gci@gje.net](mailto:gci@gje.net).

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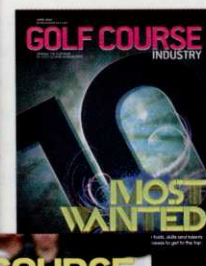
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to  
the **EDITOR**

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## (WEST WATER

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Another legislative liaison for the superintendents' association in California is Jim Alwine, who moved in July to a new post from Stockton CC in the central valley to Bernardo Heights GC in San Diego County.

"We all know this across the board, 20 percent is not a very efficient way to conserve water," Alwine argues, "and most golf course supers in this state are already doing their job with drought resistant turf and wetting agents, so there's been a push to find more of a coefficient for Bermuda grass, rye grass and how much water you should use for certain areas. Golf courses are very efficient irrigators and a 1 percent leak would create a wet spot on the golf course."

"I really hope the 20 percent reduction doesn't happen in 2015, but if it does, that's just poor management," he argues.

The state's water use policy as it applies to golf courses has been more reactive than proactive, Alwine continues, "it was a hot button issue three years ago when we were in a drought, but the last two years have been very good rain years so legislators are not looking at water 'cause water's not a problem right now."

Alwine urges superintendents in other parts of the country who face water use restrictions to have a drought contingency plan in place.

"You start picking areas you know you can do without, some of the out-of-play areas and native areas you can go completely off, like the driving range, out of play areas," he advises, "some of the out-of-play areas and native areas you can cut it completely off if you need to." Then, if need be, you can drop water use by 30 percent in rough areas and 20 percent in primary rough areas, and 15 percent in fairways.

"Greens you pretty much don't

want to mess with, because of the cost of each green complex as well as a host of diseases and other issues that can come into play" he adds.

"Tees, greens and approaches are what make a golf course, so they should be pretty much untouched in your drought plan," he adds.

"Another way to make sure you're using water as best you can is to use water meters to measure the soil, have a weather station so you know what the ET rate is for that day, and if you know those factors and what your turf can handle, tools like wetting agents can be extremely valuable," he argues.

Pressed for more advice, Alwine recalls advice he got from a superintendent he worked for many years ago; stronger turf ultimately needs less water, he points out.

"If you're not killing anything, you're not trying hard enough," Alwine continues, or, in other words let the weaker turf fade away and die and let the stronger turf survive, "some of the poannia in your rough, let it be replaced by Bermuda or rye grass. It's kind of a survival of the fittest mentality and you end up making a very strong turf system that way." **GCI**

*Richard J. Skelly writes about golf, music and finance and is a frequent GCI contributor.*

## (MILLER

*continued from page 28)*

insisted we sit and chat for a while, often with a crackling fire in the fireplace and surrounded by walls of books.

And it was the books that interested me so much, too. His interest in history, especially that of New England and of golf, was everywhere. Geoff and Ron Whitten wrote the book *The Golf Course* in the early 1980s, and I would bet it must have held some sort of popularity record

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for books of its kind. I recall Ron telling me that he carried his golf course information in his shirt pocket on a floppy disc while Geoff had his golf course information nearly filed on 3x5 recipe cards! I have all of his books, each inscribed by some wonderful remarks. They are my library treasures.

Geoffrey Cornish died on Feb. 10th of this year, and many kind and truthful things have been written about him. He was recognized with most of golf's awards,

during his long life of 97 years, yet you'd never guess it. He was kind and humorous and loyal and humble. He was an architect and author and ambassador for golf. He was a historian, an educator and a friend to golf course superintendents. It is going to be really difficult to go out East around Columbus Day and not be able to see him. The landscape will be beautiful, the leaves spectacular, but knowing I cannot visit with this grand gentleman makes me sad. I really miss him. **GCI**

**"I love stories Rod Johnson tells from his time working with Geoff on a master plan for Pine Hills CC."**



**Pat Jones** is editorial director and publisher of Golf Course Industry. He can be reached at [pjones@gie.net](mailto:pjones@gie.net) or 216-236-5854.

## BACKFIRE

Someone once defined “proactivity” as climbing out of your foxhole to get a better look at the enemy. By attempting to get ahead of the game, you put yourself at risk of getting shot.

In three decades of participating in/covering the industry’s attempts to communicate its environmental story I’ve seen plenty of examples of well-intentioned efforts backfiring.

Back in the late ‘80s, a bunch of Long Island courses volunteered to be a part of a groundwater study to see if chemicals were leaching into their sandy soils. The results showed only trace amounts – parts per billion – were detectable in the water table and they were well below EPA standards. Good news, right? Nope, the state’s attorney general issued a scathing report called “Toxic Fairways” indicting us for poisoning the Empire State’s drinking water.

Not long afterwards, we shot ourselves in the foot with the release of the infamous University of Iowa study of mortality among superintendents. The concept was good: use the association’s insurance program – which paid a small death benefit to the widows and orphans of deceased members – to track whether any “pesticide-linked” cancers or conditions were higher than the rest of the population. The theory was we were the canaries in the coal mine and if we weren’t dropping like flies, no one else should worry. Good plan until the research kind of, maybe indicated higher-than-average rates of non-Hodgkins lymphoma and brain cancer and the media and regulators had a field day. Again, the road to hell was paved with the good intentions of proactivity.

There have been dozens more “oops” moments since, but the latest

was a Bloomberg news item from last month in which their cynical reporter decides to turn an environmentally positive press release from a golf management company ass-over-teakettle and chide us for not doing more. The whole thing is at [bloom.bg/NtWIVQ](http://bloom.bg/NtWIVQ), but here’s his response to the positive statistics the release cited about golf:

“Now, if you squint, turn your head a bit, and look really hard, you might see this instead:

**...no matter how well we tell our story, there are people who simply won’t believe it...**

- 23 percent of 18-hole golf facilities have taken no steps to conserve energy.
  - 9 percent of acreage on an 18-hole golf course is not considered “green space.”
  - Almost 15 percent of golf courses tap municipal water facilities.
- “The most telling part of the announcement is what’s missing: the lack of brag-worthy efforts to control fertilizer run-off at U.S. golf courses. It’s not like nobody’s aware of the problem.

“Nitrogen and phosphorus runoff from fertilizer are a large-scale environmental problem in many parts of the U.S., and the world. Rivers carry these compounds to the ocean, or bays. Algae feast on the nutrients. Their populations bloom and crash, depleting oxygen and leaving ‘dead zones.’ The annual Gulf of Mexico dead zone, an oxygen-depleted, lifeless area that forms in spring and disappears in the fall, reached 6,765 square miles in area last year, fed mostly by Midwestern agriculture.

“In the absence of gob-smacking accomplishments, maybe golf official-

dom can encourage course superintendents to raise awareness about systemic national environmental problems, and popularize best practices without interfering with the game. That way, golfers can even become more mindful about fertilizer use for their residential lawns, which dwarf golf courses in total acreage. Green, for lack of a better word is good, but not when it’s helping algal blooms create toxic assets.”

So we’ve now killed the Gulf of

Mexico... and we’re supposed to be educating Joe Homeowner about responsible weed-and-feed use. Egads!

I feel sorry for the PR folks who sent that nice release and got a public ass-whoopin’ for their trouble. Hey, I’ve been there, done that and got the scars across my posterior to prove it. Proactivity hurts sometimes.

That’s why I worry any time GCSAA or other organizations do big studies to benchmark water, fertilizer or chemical usage. These studies are initiated with the best of intentions until you consider the guaranteed, automatic, every-single-friggin’-time response activists, government and media have to those studies: “Cool...thanks for the benchmark data. Now tell us how you’re going to reduce those inputs by 50 percent within 10 years.”

My point is that no matter how well we tell our story, there are people who simply won’t believe it or will spin it in whichever way suits their agendas. That is the inherent danger of proactivity. Yet, it shouldn’t stop us from trying. Just be prepared for the fact that there’s always a bunch of guns pointed directly at our foxhole. **GCI**



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