

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Golf Course Supply Falls For Second Straight Year

For the second year in a row, the National Golf Foundation has reported that net golf course openings — the combination of course openings minus course closures — were in the red in 2007. NGF has identified 113 golf courses, in 18-hole equivalents, that opened for business in the United States in 2007. During the same period, there were 121.5 golf course closures, resulting 8.5 fewer courses. NGF reported minus 26.5 net golf course openings in 2006, the first time the statistic was in the red in 60 years.

Joe Beditz, president and CEO of the NGF, recently told *Golfdom* he doesn't view the negative numbers as a negative situation. Beditz and others in the golf industry view waning supply as a much-needed correction in an industry that was overbuilt in the 1990s and early 2000s. It is basic economics — the supply of golf courses has exceeded demand.

"Over the last 15 years, the golf course industry has had more than 4,500 openings," Beditz says. "So if we're down a little against 4,500 up, this is not a major correction. This is like the Dow going to 18,000 and then dropping back to 17,500."

Looking at the past five years combined, the NGF reports there have been 678.5 openings vs. 491.5 closures for a net positive of 187 courses, or a modest 37.4 per year. That equates to less than three-tenths of a percent of total supply being added per year, and the overall number of golf courses is virtually unchanged from five years ago.

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International Irrigation Show Asks Scary Question

By Dan Jacobs

It's a question that golf superintendents don't want to ask. But if drought conditions in the Southeast persist or spread to other regions, what will they do when watering limits become outright bans and water is restricted for anything other than human consumption?

It's a question that wasn't asked too loudly at the International Irrigation (IA) Show in San Diego in December, but it was asked.

And it was answered.

"Bankruptcy is a pretty common word in Georgia business right now," said Andrew K. Smith, external affairs director for the Irrigation Association. "They weren't ready up front. When you start to deal with these things after the fact, you've got a problem."

What it boils down to, Smith continues, is that organizations, even those in non-drought areas (and maybe especially those) need to conserve water when they have it. Food, drinking and sanitation will always come first. And without water, land-

scaping and irrigation in particular will be "dead in the water."

That concern became the impetus for IA's new vision, mission and unifying statements. The statements and the plan to implement them were put together earlier last year and presented to the IA membership at the meeting.

Most companies and organizations have a vision and a mission statement — it's almost a requirement of doing business. The IA's entries for each of these statements are straightforward enough: The vision — "Be the recognized authority on irrigation," and the mission statement — "Promote efficient irrigation." But it's the unifying statement that separates the IA from other organizations.

The IA has more than 1,700 members and comprises several groups each with its own agenda, and they could not always agree on goals for the organization. They settled, instead, on a unifying statement — "Ensure water is available for irrigation for future generations." ■

Jacobs is managing editor of Golfdom's sister publication, Landscape Management.