

## In Deep Water

I recently sat in on a big city's request-for-proposal meeting to hear about a contract bidding process to work on the fleet of "product" (aka city golf courses). As you might imagine, it was standing-room only considering the lean economy. Architects and contractors came from throughout the country.

The architects and contractors were prepped during most of the meeting for the extensive documenting necessary when contacting the minority subcontractors they were required to hire for work, which the city was not yet ready to detail. (Key thing to remember: They'll be checking to see that you didn't call at lunchtime to not reach the subcontractor, the one you're hiring for work to be determined.)

Naturally, the big-city bureaucracy had developed a cutesy acronym for the minority subcontractor-hiring process, but it turns out that even the city itself discriminates against the disadvantaged.

When an architect timidly raised his hand and asked if those with disabilities were included in the process, a hollow-eyed bureaucrat replied, "We're not in the disability business. That's federal."

But the highlight of the meeting came when the city's own golf manager got up and started talking. "If any of you have been to our courses, you know we put out a good product," he said. "A green product."

I, the blithering idiot, assumed he was talking about strides the city made to make its courses more environmentally friendly. After all, the city is in the early stages of a severe drought, complete with workable water restrictions on residents and now golf courses (but only

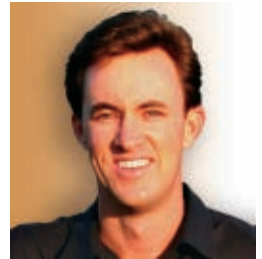
GOLF'S FUTURE IS IN BIG TROUBLE IF FOLKS

LIKE THIS BIG-CITY GOLF MANAGER REFUSE

TO UNDERSTAND THAT COURSES MUST BECOME

MORE EFFICIENT IRRIGATORS

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



after some shrewd negotiating by the golf lobby). Many of the restrictions, enforced by ticket-distributing undercover water cops, have reduced wasteful water use without harm to quality of life.

So, as I awaited the exciting explanation about how the city courses embraced the 21st century, it became apparent the green he was talking about had nothing to do with organic fertilizers or converting turf acreage to non-irrigated native grass.

No, he was talking about green grass. "I told my superintendents, I don't care if you get a ticket, bring it to me because we will give our golfers green golf courses," he said to the room of golf industry veterans.

You gotta love a city where the staff openly defies its mayor in a public forum.

However, it was hard to stay quiet when you know that at the same time, golf faces years of controversy, battles, skirmishes and all-out ridicule for being labeled as a huge water waster. And much of that perception is tied to this ridiculous obsession with lime-shaded turf. It became clear that even with guns to their heads, some in the game with the power to help steer us in a bet-

ter direction still just don't get how serious this fight will get.

Think "Road Warrior" and mo-hawked motorcycle-riding lunatics fighting over land, not for the views or the great shopping nearby but for water rights. Oh, golf courses will be in demand . . . for their wells, irrigation rights and not for the privilege of enjoying the Royal and Ancient.

Do these folks really think Ted Turner is buying up huge chunks — 2 million acres at last count — of the western United States just because he can? Or because he wants to put ranchers out of business? Or to let the buffalo roam again?

No, he wants control of the world's largest underground water system because he knows the future will be all about water.

When will folks like this big-city golf manager begin to understand where the future is headed? Will it take the paralysis of golf before they get it?

Because *we are* all in that disability business.

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