

THRU THE GREEN

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Published monthly by the
Golf Course Superintend-
ent's Association of
Northern California.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Well sports fans, the "Big Show" is upon us. The GCSAA membership, 15,000 strong, from golf courses and their support corps throughout the world, will journey into the San Francisco Bay Area to partake in one of the most remarkable educational experiences accessible to turfgrass managers. The 66th International Conference and Show is set to open on Monday, February 20, 1995, in San Francisco, at the Moscone Center. Those of you never before attending this annual event are truly in for an experience.

You will encounter: world renowned educators presenting basic principles to their most progressive ideologies, an equipment show reaching

beyond any expectations, mingling with your peers not only from North America but from across many seas. The USGA presentation, the Society of Golf Course Architects, golf course builders, irrigation designers and installers, and manufacturers of equipment and supplies vital to the continued progression of our livelihood. Attendees will log many miles on foot throughout the Moscone Center and adjacent streets, so be sure to wear comfortable shoes.

The California Golf Course Superintendents Association will open the doors to a spacious Hospitality Suite for your enjoyment during the conference. The Hospitality Suite will be open Thursday, February 24 through Saturday, February 26 beginning at

6:00pm. By being a member of GCSANC you are also a member of the state association, so please "make yourself at home" and enjoy. Sponsorship of the Hospitality Suite will be undertaken by our very supportive affiliate members on Thursday and Friday nights, while CIBA will be the sole sponsor for one night. Please acknowledge their support by sending your business their way if you are given the opportunity to make a choice.

To those of you playing in the golf tournament, good luck and "May All Your Putts Drop."

See you on the
Randy Gai, CGCS
President

Greening of the Golf Green

From their fairways to their trim putting greens, golf courses evoke human perception of the ultimate in natural perfection. Over 100 courses entertain golfers in the Bay-Delta region. Maintaining these emerald islands in the midst of the region's naturally golden landscape can mean heavy use of pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers and water. But golf course superintendents claim that a variety of new management methods may now be reducing the game's toll on the Bay-Delta environment.

Critics say a badly managed golf course can cause ground and surface water contamination, nitrogen leading or runoff, chemical drift from pesticide use, and other detrimental effects. In response, the golf industry recently published guidelines for course managers on how to reduce

chemical fertilizer use, dispose of clippings and other waste, and protect and conserve water. It also launched a \$3 million-a-year research effort aimed at developing new turf grasses that thrive on half as much water and require fewer doses of pesticide. An upcoming trade conference will emphasize techniques for environmentally sensitive turfgrass management.

"Golf course superintendents have refocused to ensure they're doing their share of environmental management," says Dr. Ali Harivandi, a turfgrass researcher at the University of California Cooperative Extension.

Manager Tom Thatcher has put some of this theory into practice at the Stanford Golf Course, where two holes play across San Francisco.

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Creek. "We're using integrated pest management," he says.

"We go out and determine what's necessary instead of applying pesticides on a programmatic schedule. As a result, there's no leaching. We've never detected any nitrates going into the water supply. We use water sparingly. There's a computerized irrigation system on the course that's sensitive to weather, so we're only replacing the water that's evaporating."

"Golf courses don't necessarily have to be a bad neighbor to a river or stream," says the Coyote Creek Riparian Station's Mike Rigney, who is helping to develop a watershed management plan for San Francisquito Creek.

"As long as there's no contamination from herbicides, I'd rather have a golf course next door than a housing development or industry," he says. Rigney points to other "green" Stanford course management efforts, such as landscaping with native vegetation, leaving tree snags in place, creating protective berms around small drainage areas, and composting with

grass clippings, techniques he says benefit the creek's riparian habitat. Indeed, one prominent New York state wildlife protection group has such faith in the habitat potential of golf courses that it has developed a sanctuary program to help course managers enhance habitat, conserve natural resources and protect environmental quality.

Beyond its possible value to wildlife, Harivandi says golf course vegetation, particularly in urban areas, can reduce pollution, glare, noise, dust and heat build-up. Golf courses can also serve as wastewater disposal sites. Harivandi says 15 to 20 Bay Area golf courses currently irrigate with reclaimed water, and that number continues to grow. "Besides reducing the need for fresh water, reclaimed water also has quite a bit of nutrient value, so superintendents can reduce the amount of fertilizer they use," he says.

Many dispute the claim that golf courses can provide a net benefit to the environment. "I think you'll always have some problems because in effect, you're creating an exotic landscape over many acres to achieve what people

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**Tips from the USGA
A Farewell Letter**

*by Paul Vermuelen
USGA Agronomist*

During my travels over the past eight months, I have learned to appreciate the importance of clear communication on the topic of environment. Advocates of a pesticide free environment have accused pesticide users of unnecessarily endangering the lives of people around them. To boldly state that these criticisms are either warranted or unwarranted would be in my opinion an oversight by the turfgrass industry. What is needed to appropriately address public concern is valid scientific research that either favors or condemns the continued use of pesticides on an individual basis.

Golfers all across the United States have responded to this need for clarification by giving their financial support to several leading universities. I would like to invite everyone (Superintendents, General Managers, Green Chairpersons, members of the Board of Directors, Sales Specialists, etc.) to one of the following regional conferences where the results of this support will be shared:

March 15, 1995
Sharon Heights Country Club
Menlo Park, CA

March 24, 1995
UC - Riverside
Riverside, CA

April 5, 1995
Spanish Trails Country Club
Las Vegas, NV

April 6, 1995
Arizona Country Club
Phoenix, AZ

If you have not received a registration form for the regional conference in your area, please contact our office and we will send one along ASAP.

This is also my last opportunity to express my gratitude to all those that have educated me during my travels on the west coast. On March 1st, I will be reassigned to the Mid-

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think of as a golf course," says the S.F. Regional Board's Dale Bowyer.

Barbara Salzman of the Marin Audubon Society agrees. "Golf courses are especially problematic for species like Canada geese.

They're grazers, and they've overproduced because there's all this phony food (turf) around. They leave their droppings, so people complain," she says, adding,

"Course managers extol the virtues of wildlife until they become pests. You have to realize that a lot of this natural golf courses information comes from the golf course builders themselves."

The lack of independent data hinders regulators' ability to assess success or failure of new management practices. "We haven't done any intensive monitoring of golf courses," says Bowyer. "It's probably a good idea." Adds Rigney, "There are so many proposals for new golf courses. I'd like more good strong evidence of how they impact the environment."

This evidence will surely be needed given the 2,000 new golf courses now in various stages of planning or

construction across the U.S. Locally, a combined golf and luxury housing development proposed for the site of the Renaissance Pleasure Fair in Novato has sparked controversy. Although project sponsors say the golf course is being designed to incorporate conservation practices from the ground up, its construction still raises questions about the best use of the Bay Area's remaining open space, not to mention erosion, loss of riparian habitat, streambed alteration and wetland fill. "After all," says Salzman, "they're developing on diked baylands."

"We're getting into regional planning issues here too," says Bowyer. "At some point, we may have to decide that we have enough golf courses." Or that golf courses, no matter how environmentally sound, aren't Nature.

Reprinted from *Estuary*
August 1994

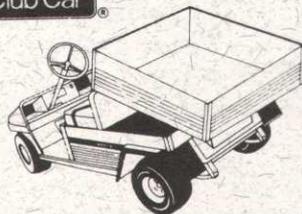


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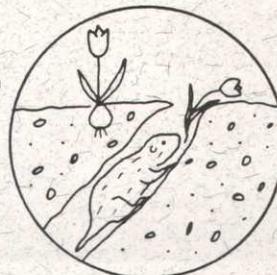
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