

LABORATORY ACCREDITATION PROGRAM ANNOUNCED FOR PUTTING GREEN MATERIALS TESTING

In cooperation with the USGA, the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) has formulated a program for accrediting laboratories that test putting green materials. This initiative will provide a service to golf by maintaining a list of dependable laboratories available for analyzing components specified in the *USGA Recommendations for Putting Green Construction*.

A2LA, headquartered in Gaithersburg, Maryland, is a nonprofit, non-governmental, public service, membership organization organized primarily for the purpose of formally recognizing the competence of testing laboratories that meet stringent international criteria and have been found competent to perform specific tests or types of tests. It has accredited over 800 laboratories in fields as varied as biology, chemistry, construction materials, geotechnical, environmental, mechanical, and thermal testing.

"We are pleased to work with the United States Golf Association in the development of a program specifically to support the competence of testing in the putting green materials industry," Roxanne Robinson, vice president of A2LA, said.

One of the major objectives of this program is to provide golf course superintendents, officials, architects, builders, and suppliers who need putting green testing services with a list of physical soil testing laboratories whose competence is regularly evaluated and documented.

The accreditation process applicable to the special putting green laboratory accreditation program was designed to meet the requirements of the USGA and of golf courses that build greens to USGA recommendations. It requires meeting general and specific criteria. In order to be accredited in this program, a testing laboratory must be competent to perform, at a minimum, the following tests:

1. Dry Preparation of Soil Samples for Particle-Size Analysis and Determination of Soil Constants;

2. Particle-Size Analysis of Soil;

3. Standard Test Method for Moisture, Ash, and Organic Matter of Peat and Other Organic Soils;

4. Standard Test Method for Saturated Hydraulic Conductivity, Water Retention, Porosity, Particle Density and Bulk Density of Putting Green and Sports Turf Root Zones;

5. Standard Test Method for Particle-Size Analysis and Sand Shape Grading of Golf Course Putting Green and Sports Field Root Zone Mixes;

6. Standard Test Method for Organic Matter Content of Putting Green and Sports Turf Root Zone Mixes.

Additional turf tests can be added to a laboratory's scope as desired.

Laboratories seeking accreditation must allocate approximately \$4,000 every two years, which includes a three-day, on-site inspection and review. This on-site review is conducted by one of several A2LA assessors chosen on the basis of their testing or calibration expertise. Currently, the members of this assessment team include three retired professors: Dr. Don Waddington from Pennsylvania State University, Dr. Bill Dest from the University of Connecticut, and Dr. Coleman Ward from Auburn University. Each laboratory's accreditation lasts for two years, at which time they must undergo reexamination.

Another requirement of accreditation is participation in the Western States Proficiency Testing Program conducted by Dr. Robert O. Miller of the University of California at Davis and Dr. Janice Kotuby-Amacher of Utah State



A2LA-accredited laboratories have met rigorous competency standards for testing materials used in the construction of USGA greens.

University. It will involve a quarterly exchange of golf-green soil materials on which each laboratory performs physical analysis. Each laboratory will receive a quarterly report reviewing its work, plus notification of all values exceeding the program warning limits. Annually, each laboratory and the USGA will receive a report of the entire program with individual performance scores.

The *Green Section Record* regularly will publish a list of laboratories accredited by A2LA. This list will also appear on the USGA's Internet site. Only laboratories that have passed this rigorous testing process will appear, and the USGA recommends that only A2LA-accredited laboratories be used to test materials for building greens according to USGA recommendations. At this time, two laboratories have

passed muster with A2LA. These facilities are:

Brookside Laboratories, Inc.
308 S. Main Street
New Knoxville, OH 45871
Attn: Mark A. Flock
(419) 753-2448
FAX (419) 753-2949

Thomas Turf Services, Inc.
1501 FM 2818, Suite 302
College Station, TX 77840-5247
Attn: Bob Yzaguirre/Jim Thomas
(409) 764-2050
FAX (409) 764-2152

Questions about the accreditation process should be directed to The American Association for Laboratory Accreditation, 656 Quince Orchard Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20878; (301) 670-1377 or FAX (301) 869-1495. Attn: Roxanne Robinson or Ron Bell.

WILDLIFE LINKS GRANTS ANNOUNCED

The United States Golf Association (USGA) has awarded three grants totaling approximately \$100,000 to initiate Wildlife Links, golf's first comprehensive program to investigate its relationship with wildlife and its habitat. The program is coordinated by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), based in Washington, D.C.

The Colorado Bird Observatory, headquartered in Brighton, Colo., received the first grant. It will be used to create a manual that will provide golf course architects and superintendents with practical information about how to enhance golf course habitat for bird species. The working title of the publication is *Golf Courses and Bird Conservation: A Management Manual*, and it will appear next spring.

Donald F. Harker and Gary W. Libby, environmental researchers located in Frankfort, Ky., were awarded a grant to underwrite production of a publication with the tentative title *Wetlands Management Manual for Golf Courses* that is expected to appear in early 1997. This illustrated booklet will contain narrative, drawings, case studies, and key restoration techniques to help golf course superintendents understand wetlands and create programs to create, conserve, and manage them.

The final grant has been given to Audubon International, headquartered

in Selkirk, N.Y. It will be used to help computerize Audubon International's substantial database of statistical information about golf courses that it has gathered through its involvement over the past six years in managing the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses.

Complete information about each of these grants may be obtained by contacting either Dr. Peter Stangel, NFWF, 1120 Connecticut Avenue N.W., Suite 900, Washington, DC, (202) 857-5676; or Dr. Kimberly Erusha or Marty Parkes of the USGA Green Section, P.O. Box 708, Far Hills, NJ 07931, (908) 234-2300.

PINE NEEDLES NOW A SAFE HARBOR

"This program is not about regulations. It's about partnerships. It's not about mandates. It's about incentives; architects, developers, golfers, and wildlife experts working together."

With these words, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt summarized an agreement, known as the Safe

Harbor Program, signed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Pine Needles Lodge & Golf Club during the recent U.S. Women's Open held at the facility. This initiative, officially known as the Sandhills Conservation Plan, guarantees that private landowners such as golf courses will not be subject to restrictions under the Endangered Species Act after they succeed in attracting threatened species to their land and later decide to convert the property to alternative uses.

The federally endangered species in question in the Sandhills of North Carolina, where Pine Needles is located, is a bird called the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker (RCW). This seven-inch-long bird excavates nesting cavities in live pine trees usually more than a century old. RCWs thrive in a golf-course environment because they prefer the open pines often found on golf courses throughout the area compared to dense forests with significant underbrush. More than a dozen of the approximately 40 golf courses in the Pinehurst area have enrolled to date, with the Pinehurst Resort leading the way by enrolling last year (*Green Section Record*, July/August 1995). In

U.S. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt (far right) confers with Mark Cantrell of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service about the Safe Harbor Program operating in the Pinehurst region.





Secretary Babbitt with USGA President Judy Bell during the signing ceremony at the 1996 U.S. Women's Open.

excess of 20,000 acres of privately owned land, much of it golf-course acreage, now fall under the Safe Harbor Program.

"What I'd like to do is talk about two of my favorite subjects, woodpeckers and golfers, and the very happy conjunction of the two and the partnership that is now emerging between the owners and managers of golf courses and the surrounding natural values of the land," Babbitt said during the signing ceremony.

"Golf courses, at their best, are very closely designed and related to the natural environment and the landscape. And indeed the extraordinary draw of the golf course is a function both of its challenge to the player and the way that it reveals and relates to the landscape," Babbitt continued. "And what we have found here in the Sandhills of North Carolina means that good golf courses are also excellent woodpecker habitat. It ought to be possible to design and operate golf courses in a way that actually enhances wildlife values. That's an important lesson that I think every person who's interested in the game of golf can take all over this United States of America is that the presence of golf courses can actually increase the amount of wildlife."

ENVIRONMENTAL PRINCIPLES ADOPTED

Consider this scenario: Delegates from various entities throughout the nation meet periodically in extended discussions, attempting to forge a compromise among seemingly disparate interests and goals. These gatherings extend over 12 months and involve countless written revisions. Finally, a document is endorsed that articulates the much-thought-out principles.

The reference in this case is not the Continental Congress and its activities leading to ratification of the Declaration of Independence. Instead, it represents more recent activities of a myriad of golf and environmental interests, and an innovative document called *Environmental Principles for Golf Courses in the United States*. Unveiled during the second Golf and The Environment Conference, held in Pinehurst, N.C., in mid-March, it offers a framework under which environmental excellence is stressed in all aspects of golf course planning and siting, design, construction, maintenance, and facility operations.

The principles are envisioned as a tool for national use while keeping in mind that any assessment of the environmental compatibility of an indi-

vidual course site is a decision that must be made by local communities. The principles are voluntary and are not intended for use in making judgments about socio-economic issues. They assume that regulatory compliance has been achieved and are designed to provide opportunities for those involved in the golf industry to go beyond minimum standards required by law.

The document appears in its entirety on the USGA's Internet site on the World Wide Web at <http://www.usga.org>. Copies may also be obtained through the USGA Green Section at (908) 234-2300.

USGA RESEARCH SUMMARIES AVAILABLE

The 1995 Turfgrass and Environmental Research Summary is now available from the USGA.

The Turfgrass and Environmental Research Program, sponsored by the USGA, has three primary goals: develop turfgrasses for golf courses that substantially reduce water use, pesticide applications, and maintenance costs; develop management practices for new and established turfs that protect the environment while providing quality playing surfaces for the game of golf; and encourage young scientists to become leaders in turfgrass research. The accomplishments of the 41 current research projects funded through the USGA Turfgrass and Environmental Research Program are summarized in the 1995 research summary.

Also included in the document is a list of the ten research projects to be conducted on the construction and maintenance of greens. The goal of this research is to identify the best combinations of construction, grow-in procedures, and post-construction maintenance practices that prevent long-term problems, reduce environmental impacts, and produce high-quality playing surfaces. Beginning in 1996, this is a five-year research effort.

The 84-page research summary is available free of charge by leaving your postal mailing address on the USGA Internet site (<http://www.usga.org>), contacting Mary Jane Kymer at the USGA Green Section (908-234-2300), or by writing to the USGA Green Section, P.O. Box 708, Far Hills, NJ 07931. In the near future, the entire research summary will be available on the USGA Internet site.