

Golf Course Assessment  
for  
Dairy Creek Golf Course  
San Luis Obispo County, California



By

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## Facility Report – Dairy Creek Golf Course

To the County of San Luis Obispo, California:

This facility assessment is undertaken on the basis of a full day visit on Monday, August 22, 2016 and the morning of Tuesday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>. I also attended a public meeting at the golf course during the evening of August 22<sup>nd</sup>. During my visit I toured the entire course, reviewed the entire property including the adjoining camp ground, botanical gardens, ball fields and additional property to the east. This tour was attended by Nick Franco, Director of Parks, Josh Heptig, Golf Course Superintendent, and Joel Clay of Golden State Golf Company; the golf course concessionaire. We were then joined by additional County Parks staff over lunch for a brainstorming session. This discussion revolved around getting an understanding of the golf course and park operations, the need for additional amenities, and overall park improvements the County will need to address in the future.

With this report, I hope to promote “outside of the box” thinking, and present Dairy Creek with ways to position the property for greater future success. As it stands, *Dairy Creek faces some serious questions regarding water availability, cohesion, and future long term investment*. In the end, it is my hope that the Golf Course and the game of golf will play an integral role in promoting outdoor recreational activities to all residents of SLO County. Our Community Links® concept and brand does just this, and I will discuss in more detail in a following section.

The goals of this assessment are:

1. Assess the current levels of community engagement and look for ways to increase the course’s ability to attract 100% of your community, as well as look for opportunities for increasing local pride in the course, growing the game of golf within the community, and reducing the general fund expense.
2. Assess the overall water requirements for the golf course and the surrounding park, and make recommendations for adjustments to address the current water situation.
3. Assess the needs of the overall facility and make recommendations for improvement including the introduction of a special events space, additional uses such as walking/hiking trails and the exploration of an expansion of the campground. These recommendations are to be laid out as a “grand plan” in clear, achievable steps.
4. Understand the overall golf course in terms of its current layout and condition, and make recommendations for possible adjustments related to reducing water allocation, with the reality being that no potable water will be used to irrigate the golf course and surrounding landscape.

Many of the items identified within this report will focus specifically on the Golf Course and the property surrounding its boundary. My experience working in the area, as well as the numerous golfers that attended the public meeting, tells me there is significant loyalty and attachment to Dairy Creek. As someone who works solely in the golf industry, facilities like Dairy Creek are incredible assets to the game of Golf, and tremendous stewards to our communities. Understanding there are needs beyond just the course itself, and by focusing on how to improve the overall experience at El Chorro Regional Park, the County will yield greater participation in the entire property. And, since the golf course is already viewed as an integral part of the County’s recreational offerings by its golfing residents, I feel Dairy Creek is ahead

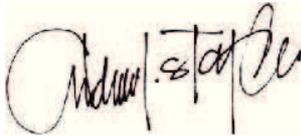
of the game in breaking down the traditional view of a golf course.

The current state of the Golf Course in regards to overall water availability is another story. At the current condition, it is difficult to envision the golf course being successful in the long run. I see significant challenges in regards to allocating the proper amounts of water to irrigate the entire golf course. Unless serious consideration is given to its future as a quality golf experience combined with a cohesive connection to the overall park, I see little hope for keeping your current customer base, let alone attracting more players. Further, the chances of continuing to irrigate only the greens and tees during the summer months, while transitioning into a “seasonal” course in the winter, appears difficult and not very efficient.

I do feel strongly that the course should remain an 18 hole course for as long as possible, if for no other reason than to allow the planning process more time to ensure the proper decisions can be made for the long term health of the entire park. This report will explore solutions for the water crisis, and weigh the pros and cons of making serious changes to the golf course and the overall park. Ultimately, our goal is to position the County with the best ideas for creating a plan to make this property the best it can be, with the resources available.

Please note, these observations and recommendations are based on the information provided to me at the time of writing this report, and should be used for discussion purposes only. Therefore, many of the ideas discussed herein should be properly researched and examined further to ensure their viability and cost effectiveness.

Sincerely,



Andy Staples, ASGCA  
Staples Golf Design



Attachments:

Course Profile

Site notes

Water use analysis spreadsheets

Water Resources Section, Environmental Impact Report

“Setting Up Golf Courses for Success”

## Executive Summary

### General comments

1. All areas of community engagement, including golfer and non-golfers amenities alike, should immediately be examined through stakeholder meetings. The purpose of these meetings should be to drive consensus on the future of the golf course. Options should revolve around keeping a seasonal golf course of 18 holes, reducing the size of the course, and/ or even repurposing the course to a more recreationally oriented facility. Focus on a driving range, short game practice, and even additional uses such as zip lines, mountain biking, trail uses, etc, should all be considered. Increasing local pride in Dairy Creek is essential to the future health of the facility. This should be the first step in moving forward with any future planning.
2. Keeping a golf component intact at Dairy Creek is extremely important. Since it is difficult to understand the specific issues related to the future of the golf course at this time, it is imperative to gain support from all levels of the County government and community for this facility. Dairy Creek is an outstanding example of a quality golf product with affordable rates, and it's difficult to envision this being eliminated. Understanding the current golf market and then creating a powerful vision based of the facility's ideal demographics, will allow the County to focus on a plan that will ensure the end product has the greatest potential to be as successful as possible.
3. It is highly advisable to perform an overall El Chorro Regional Park Master Plan, addressing areas noted within this report. A Master Plan should be viewed as a "road map" to your property's future. A proper plan addresses issues of concern and areas of opportunity, combined with an analysis of the business case for alternative, each mapped out in realistic, achievable steps that can be implemented at any time. Taking this step will ensure Dairy Creek stays at the forefront of the local community and will position itself for future success.
4. Continuing to look for ground water on property to assist in supplementing the current water allocation is recommended. Being able to increase the overall water quantity even by a few acre feet will go a long way towards ensuring the golf course continues to be as financially successful as possible.
5. "Kids, Families, Beginner golfers" should be your calling card and the focus for planning and future marketing. Regardless of the number of holes, a quality practice range, short game area, and even a short course for beginners should be integrated into the plan. Lighting the driving range and expanding the practice areas to make them more family and beginner friendly not only helps clarify your target market, it fits perfectly into public golf's national trend.
6. Dairy Creek should look for ways to diversify its user groups and find ways to bring 100% of the community to the golf course and surrounding property. An adjusted circulation flow of other park uses oriented towards the golf course, expanded/added special events space and camp ground, increased outdoor patio and seating areas, a health oriented walking trail, and better visual connections on to the golf course, will increase how your users interact with your facility. The clubhouse and surrounding spaces can utilize non-traditional uses such as outdoor concerts,

community gatherings, and even farmers markets. A dedicated trail system that connects to the clubhouse will also aid in the course's ability to attract golfers and non-golfers alike.

7. Having spent significant time reviewing the golf course and its infrastructure, visiting with staff and the community, and also reviewing the current situation related to available water, we feel it is necessary to identify a series of "if-then" scenarios based on future input from the County and its citizens. They are:
  - If everything stays as is, and the course receives approximately 100 Acre Feet (AF) of water per year, then there is enough water to only irrigate the greens and tees with some of the fairways (no roughs) during the winter months, and only greens and tees in the summer months.
  - If the current available quantity of water remains at 100AF per year, to be delivered only during the winter months, then it appears to be very difficult, if not impossible, to provide predictable, consistent playing conditions that meet the demands of today's golfer on an annual basis.
  - If the plan is to try to work within the confines of 100AF per year, then the golf course will be dependent completely on favorable weather (wet years) in order to provide consistent conditions that meet golfer expectations. Further, the golf course certainly suffer during the dry years.
  - If the course attempts to depend upon weather, and tries to provide a "seasonal" golf course for its customers, then the course will need to exhaust much of its annual water allotment towards the "grow in" of the course each year in order to get the course fully developed for play, limiting the amount of water available for everyday maintenance once the course is up and running.
  - If the golf course continues to only receive 100AF of water per year, then there is no need for added storage on the golf course as the current amount of water needed for irrigation of the course meets the amount water storage currently on the property (approximately 75AF of storage in 3 ponds).
  - If the County increases its water allotment to exceed 100AF per year, then it would be prudent to examine ways to increase the storage potential on the golf course in order to fully utilize the "extra" water.
  - If the golf course only receives 100AF of water per year, and the County desires to provide quality, predictable maintenance that meets golfer expectations, then the allowable amount of turf is approximately 35-40 acres (the current golf course exists as 89 acres).

## Specific Recommendations

### *The golf course*

- Establish a clear marketing vision for the property. Consider rebranding El Chorro Regional Park to *El Chorro Community Links*® (See the *Community Links*® *Vision* section).
- Perform focus groups to engage the golfers and non-golfers in order to begin educating local residents as soon as reasonable to ensure the proper information is released to the public, giving them a chance to be heard.
- Utilize the focus group to drive consensus around 18 holes vs. a smaller golf course, understanding the overall acreage of turf that is available for golf based on 100AF of annual water is approximately 35-40 acres (see water use on the golf course section below).
- Continue to research and investigate the feasibility of irrigating additional acres during the winter months, focus on providing a “seasonal” golf course, understanding that the focus is on providing quality, predictable playing conditions for the users of the Dairy Creek.
- Research and investigate the business case of keeping roughly 40 irrigated acres of the current course intact, reducing the number of holes; focus on keeping play in close proximity to the clubhouse and practice area.
- In the event holes are closed, preserve the golf course in its present state for historical purposes and to ease in possible future restoration efforts.
- Focus on ways to attract 100% of your community to Dairy Creek.
- Continue to dedicate resources towards the practice area and driving range, and begin marketing Dairy Creek as a premier practice facility due to the high quality of the range, short game areas and putting greens. Consider lighting the range for night use.
- Consider ways to make the range more player friendly ensuring the player can see their ball land at the target greens. Consider artificial turf target greens, or even creating a strip of artificial turf to resemble a fairway. In the event additional water is acquired, focus irrigation on the preferred landing areas of the range.
- Budget for improvements to the range facility such as expanding/releveling the range tee, expand/re-orientate the chipping green, etc. to increase the level of quality of the practice facility.
- Consider expanding the University practice/learning area adjacent to the range in order to promote the game of golf at the high school and college level.
- Research opportunities to convert the existing range into a multi-use/special event space that could include outdoor concerts, farmers markets, and/ or other community gatherings during certain times during the year.

- Consider a small strip of artificial turf on at least two (2) tees for each hole in order to improve the uniformity of the tees, and to possibly cut back on the irrigation requirements for the tee complexes.
- Look to add a new set of forward “Scoring” or “Express” tees at approx. 4,200 yards. These tees should be placed approximately 65% of the back tee yardage in order to give the player that doesn’t have the same swing speed as an accomplished golfer the feeling of playing the same course. They should eliminate forced carries and be built to look and feel like a real tee. It also allows for a foursome to play with very few clubs in their hand and in less time than a full 18-hole round.
- Research/evaluate the ability to convert portions of the irrigation of the course, especially tees, to sub surface “drip emitter” irrigation to minimize evaporation and maximize water efficiency.
- Look to permanently reduce the number of pumps needed to run the irrigation system in the event the water use continues to remain at the lower levels of use.
- Look for available grants and rebates for reducing the overall water use, and overall power demands on the pump station.
- Consider a plan to integrate playable hazards in order to buffer shots that run through the fairway and into the native plants; design them as “catch” hazards to keep well struck shots in play.
- Consider the integration of disc golf and/or foot golf on the property. Ensure the area dedicated for these uses match the requirements in terms of safety for other users of the golf course and park.
- Consider focusing attention on the back side of the clubhouse into an outdoor seating space for special events for use by golfers and non-golfers alike. Consider adding night lighting for use by the patrons of future events.
- Investigate “prescriptive park” opportunities to attract disabled golfers, rehabilitation patients, and health-oriented relationships with local doctors. This can be done within the golf course or by identifying areas outside the golf course perimeter.
- Utilize the unused property adjacent to the parking lot as additional golf course amenities such as a putting course or chipping greens.
- Reinvigorate/continue operation of the “zero waste” facility near the golf maintenance building. Not only does this facility provide tangible, impactful results, it also provides an important opportunity to showcase how the golf course is providing environmental value in a non-traditional way.

### *El Chorro Regional Park*

- Consider a plan to unify the entire regional park by making minor modifications such as creating a main circular drive around the park, clarifying connections throughout the park via shared walking trails, and/ or increasing the overall cohesion for all users of the park and golf course.
- Consider routing all users through the clubhouse to increase traffic and potential revenue; utilize the clubhouse as the central place for check-ins, golf tee times, and food and beverage.
- Research opportunities to promote the golf course to the other users of the park by way of integration of the putting course, allowing use by non-golfers.
- Research opportunities to combine infrastructure throughout the park, and expand as necessary.
- Research opportunities to expand the existing camp ground, utilizing additional land throughout the property as necessary.
- Look to use underutilized, open parcels of land near the clubhouse such as the Walter Capps Memorial Grove for possible park expansion.
- Consider establishing a walking trail around the property with access to the clubhouse and other important pieces of the property.
- Create natural viewing areas around the golf course, far enough away from play, that enable study of the natural vegetation, and overall access to nature.
- Co-market the golf course with the surrounding botanical gardens and camp ground.
- Consider opportunities for additional uses such as mountain biking, zip lines, hiking and biking trails.

## Next Steps

In considering “What to do next?,” I offer the following steps to guide the County in moving forward with master planning, and in considering a transition to a more integrated community asset. These steps are based on experience in the field of golf course renovation and master planning, and *an understanding that buy-in from the top is critical to the success of any project of this significance*. It is understood and expected that all County procedures should be followed, and that the public engagement process is adhered to.

- Step 1 - Maintain status quo and continue to gather input and support from the County Board of Supervisors, and your citizens for the golf course. From our perspective, there isn’t a reason to jump into doing anything different with the golf course. The staff have done an excellent job addressing the current water availability issues, and the golf course continues to be played by your most ardent supporters. Also, attempt to achieve buy-in from the top around the idea of a Community Links®.

Timeframe: Begin immediately!

- Step 2 - Form an advisory committee that will be used to direct and approve all aspects of the planning process, and assist in determining the direction of any future plans for the golf course and El Chorro Regional Park. It is important to have a diverse group representing as many facets of the community as possible including non-golfers.

Timeframe: 1 month beginning in October

- Step 3 - Reach out to the community in a series of Town Hall type meetings to engage them in a conversation about their golf course and the impending water situation, how the park is being utilized, and what they would like to see through the improvement process. These should be structured to include golfers and non-golfers alike.

Timeframe: Approximately 1-2 months beginning in November

- Step 4 – Develop a Master Plan that follows a process that is directly related to what the community’s real needs.

Timeframe: Approximately 3-6 months beginning when feasible

- Step 5 - Approve the Master Plan. This can be done through a presentation to the Board or to the community at large.

Timeframe: 1-2 months

- Step 6 - Begin Implementing the Plan. This should be done at a pace that is acceptable to the County, and within approved budgets and timelines.

Timeframe: To be determined.

## **Proposed Aspects of the El Chorro Regional Park Master Plan**

Based on our one-day site assessment, the following areas point towards a Master Plan and should drive planning process. These items can be broken into two Phases in order to simplify the process.

### **Phase 1**

1. Community Engagement and Overall Needs Assessment
2. Golf Course Design Alternatives, Options A, B, C...
3. Additional Needs to be Addressed as determined throughout Phase 1

### **Phase 2**

1. Create El Chorro Community Links® Master Plan
2. Cost Estimates per Option Developed
3. Schedule for Implementation

Various disciplines are necessary to assess, plan, and communicate future improvements. These “sub consultants” will be a key component to ensuring the needs identified during the community engagement process are realistic, cost effective, and within industry standards. The following “buckets” are provided to communicate how a Master Plan should be undertaken and implemented:

Priority Team members:

1. Team Leader – Staples Golf
2. Landscape Architect/Park Planner

Additional professionals based on future needs:

1. Business Plan/Market Feasibility Consultant
2. Civil Engineer
3. Irrigation System Designer
4. Agronomist

## Observations

### The Golf Course

The golf course sits roughly six miles NW of town, just off California's historic Highway 1. The entry into the golf course is somewhat concealed and understated. The large sign noting 'GOLF' helps a bit, and communicates the fact that there is a golf course present, but a lack of clear signage and a strong entry into the property is a clear shortcoming of the facility. Upon arrival into the property, the user is met with a fork in the road with a small sign directing the user to the golf course or adjacent camp ground. This decision may be a bit confusing for a new user, but isn't a big deal for the local golfer that uses the facility often.

Upon entering the golf course, the user is met with a view to the modest clubhouse, a well landscaped parking lot, and small views of the golf course. The sense one gets is this facility is a bit upscale and very much cared for. It is clear the focus of the property is the golf course as very little communication is made that there are any other uses on the property – perhaps this is on purpose. The clubhouse is very well done, and perfectly suited for a municipal golf operation. The space hosts a pro shop, entry area and a restaurant with a fairly large seating area comfortable enough for gatherings of +/- 75 people. There is also a nice flow to an outdoor seating area that overlooks the golf course. When navigating around the building at the time of the visit, the space flowed well, was not very busy, but did have a feeling of being very well used.

The Dairy Creek property is of classic northern California rolling hills, with long views off into the surrounding landscape. The property is dramatic with very strong topography. The course was built in 1997 by John Harbottle (1959-2012), noted Seattle-based golf course architect responsible for over 20 new designs across the country. By the looks of the golf course, there was a fair amount of soil moved to create the flat green pads and level fairways of the golf course, but overall it fits in well with the surroundings, plays very fair, and has garnered incredible local support for its playability and strategy.

Upon approaching the golf course, it is immediately clear this course is seeing obvious water restrictions. Visually, only greens and tees are being watered and the rest of the turf has been un-watered causing it to go dormant or die. Some course designs would be more conducive to these dry conditions. These generally would be on flat pieces of land or ones that were built to "contain" a shot. In the case of Dairy Creek, the course was built with many strong cross slopes, and very little "containment" mounding or catch bunkers. I witnessed very hard, firm conditions that have been brought about by lack of watering of the turf. The hardening of the ground, plus the strong contour of the course, causes a struck golf ball to travel unbelievable distances due to the added bounce and roll. It would not be uncommon to see clubs that normally carry 150 to 200 yards, now measure over 300 yards. In watching a few players navigate the course, it appeared difficult to play. The conditions seem to cause a golf ball to roll uncontrollably once it hits the ground. As noted, there are even small fences placed along most of the native out of bounds areas to keep errant balls from rolling further off line and out of play. It would be advisable to consider adding some playable hazards along the edges of select holes that would stop the ball from going out of bounds or lost.

It was also noted that many fairways are now hard without any turf growth, and void of any definition. This lack of definition can cause a golfer to not know exactly where to play his ball, and then no understanding of where their ball lands after being played.

The current conditions of the golf course present serious challenges of not only attracting current golfers to the property, but also allowing for enjoyable, healthy and safe conditions. I do not believe a course of this size has ever been intentionally left to go natural, while still allowing golf to continue. The hard nature of the turf and soil need to be analyzed for the effects of a player's body and joints, as well as the longevity of equipment after prolonged play. Additionally, excessive dust and bugs have been identified as detrimental factors. The intention is to not overstate these conditions, however, due to the fact I have never seen a golf course of this condition be played as often as this one, these thoughts come to mind.



*Current conditions of the 11<sup>th</sup> holes (view from the tee towards the green)*

We reviewed the practice areas including the putting greens, short game area and driving range. Aside from the drought conditions of the entire area, they appear to be well designed and adequate for the type of golf operation at Dairy Creek. It was noted that the range, due to no longer irrigating the landing areas and target greens, is really not conducive to serious practice. When practicing, it's very important to be able to judge the distance each club is being hit, and to see the ball land relative to the target.

Another aspect of the project reviewed was the maintenance area, and the adjoining "zero waste" park. Overall, this facility is of fantastic quality, and is very well designed. The shop is clean, spacious, and very capable of handling not only the golf course, but a variety of other park spaces. I also observed that the zero waste park was limited in its operation, and appeared to be shut down. This was a disappointment on many levels. First, I know how hard the course worked to get this facility running, not to mention all the positive impacts it provided the community. And second; this facility was an important, and very worthy story nationally. Having seen the development happen first hand, and then watching the

story unfold on about every golf industry news feed (including the U.S.G.A. Green Section newsletter) was very exciting. To think this facility is no longer fully operational is a missed opportunity for the golf course, the community, San Luis Obispo County, as well as the entire industry.

My overall feeling is there is significant opportunity to make the area in and around the clubhouse a centerpiece of an outdoor activity hub that the residents will view as a significant benefit to living near Dairy Creek Golf Course. The natural beauty found throughout and around the Dairy Creek property is distinct and certainly your largest asset. Probably the largest decision the County will make will be deciding the importance of keeping all 18 holes intact, or perhaps reducing the total number of holes, if for only a portion of the year.

#### *Water use on the Golf Course*

Note: There are 7.48 gallons in cubic foot of water. In order to describe large volumes of water use, it is expressed in acre feet numbers. One acre foot equals 43,560 cubic feet and is equivalent to 325,851 gallons. One acre foot also equals the size of an acre, one foot deep.

In order to understand the current situation with regards to overall water use and irrigated acres, it is important to put the course's historical and current use into context. The existing golf course constitutes approximately 89 acres of turf. This includes all greens, tees, fairways, roughs and clubhouse landscaping. When the golf course was first approved for construction, it was estimated at that time the course would use 212.5 acre feet (AF) of effluent irrigation and 3.4 AF of State water for a total of 216 AF (see the Water Resources section of the E.I.R. in the Supplemental Information). This approved amount allows for a water allocation of 2.4 acre feet water per irrigated acre of turf (2.4 AF/Ac) (see the Water Use Summary section in the Supplemental Information). Thus, it is reasonable to use the factor of 2.4 AF/Ac to understand what exactly the golf course needs on an annual basis to properly irrigate the golf course and provide quality, consistent playing conditions.

As the golf course considers options related to the overall number of irrigated acres, and overall footprint of the course, it is important to understand that the efficient use of all available water is our number one concern. With this said, the most efficient use of water on a golf course is to irrigate turf regularly, and based on the evapotranspiration (Et) requirements of the plant due to variable weather. This allows the proper amount of water to be applied to the course on a daily basis dependent upon on plant need, while accounting for weather. Without such control, course conditions deteriorate and water efficiency is reduced.

Some conversations were had regarding a "seasonal" golf course, whereby the course would only be in prime condition during the wet winter months, while the rest of the year the course would be afforded no water (except for the greens and tees). Under this scenario, it is likely the course would need to "grown in" every year using more water per acre to get the course fully functional, and looking green. It is my understanding that direction, albeit desirable by way of keeping all 18 holes open, dramatically reduces the courses' ability to maximize efficiency and reduce the water use to the greatest extent possible.

#### *The Water Delivery System to Dairy Creek Golf Course*

The main source of irrigation water comes from the California Men's Colony (CMC) waste water treatment plant via an 8inch water delivery line. This fill line releases into the pond near #7 green and #2/9 tees.

The course has access to Whale Rock water via a 10 inch water delivery line. This fill line releases into the same pond as the CMC water line.

As part of the original plans for the course, a potable line was installed during the construction of the course. This 2inch potable water line runs from a 150,000 gallon water tank located on the hillside north of #17 fairway, to each putting green (no other area of the course) via a quick coupler system in order to flush the greens, to address possible high salt concentration in the CMC effluent water. The potable line also services including the clubhouse, cart storage, on course restroom, park offices, botanical garden, ball fields, golf course maintenance and other park areas.

The golf course clubhouse landscape and turf areas are also irrigated with CMC effluent water, as is the majority of the campground, botanical gardens, and ball fields. The potable water tank feeds minimally to the camp ground, botanical, and ball fields' potable system.

The golf course has three (3) irrigation storage ponds capable of storing up to 75AF of water. Also, historically, these ponds are able to harvest upwards of another 20-30AF of runoff during the winter months. These ponds are connected to maximize the sharing capacity between each pond, and then tied to a set overflow structure in the event the ponds reach capacity. As per Josh Heptig, it does appear there is the possibility to raise the elevation of the overflow upwards of one (1) foot, which could increase the storage capacity of the ponds by 5.5AF.

#### *El Chorro Regional Park*

The golf course is located within the same property as a 60 site camp ground, a botanical garden, dog park, two ball fields, a playground, and various walking trails. Interestingly, these other uses appear to not be associated with the golf course, and have been added into the overall park without much in the way of overall thinking or master planning. As a patron of the golf course, you may never even notice these other uses exist. Waling access to these areas is via a small footbridge. Auto access is via an extension of the Dairy Creek Road, through a small guard/fee gate.

Water use for these sections of the park constitute approximately 10AF per year. This use is attributed to general upkeep of the ground, the botanical garden, and other uses within the camp ground.

The most significant observation of the entire park was the lack of a cohesive park plan, and in seeing how the golf course and the rest of the facilities operated separately. Overall, I felt there was a need to see the circulation of the entry and roadways be redesigned to better connect each use, while clarifying how a user will navigate the facility. It seems likely not many users from the camp ground utilize the golf course clubhouse – an all too common barrier of past golf course development concepts. A small access through stairs lead to the golf cart path near the cart barn, give the users of the campground minimal access to the golf course. The County should investigate the opportunity to Master Plan the entire park to assist maximizing the efficiency of operations and to leverage use by each facility to benefit the other.

## Community Meeting



*A community meeting was held in the evening of August 22, 2016.*

I attended a public meeting on the night of August 22<sup>nd</sup>, and was pleasantly surprised to see the support for the golf course. I was able to present to them the purpose of my visit, my initial thoughts of the course and review the core philosophies of a Community Links<sup>®</sup>. There were many take-aways from this meeting, but the following themes were heard loud and clear:

1. Support for keeping 18 holes open, even if it means a seasonal golf course
2. Confusion as to how the water allocation for the golf course was calculated, and if the course would benefit from additional on-site storage
3. Interest, with a little skepticism, around the idea of Community Links<sup>®</sup>
4. Strong interest for additional uses around the course (as long as they do not negatively affect the golf experience) such as disc golf, hiking/biking trails, and the expansion of other park services
5. Strong interest to learn more and have additional public meetings on the status of the project

## The Community Links® Vision

Going back to the origins of the game, our sport has played an important role in developing a sense of community and supporting local residents. We can point to age old places such as the Old Course in St. Andrews, Scotland, and at Pinehurst in North Carolina. More recently we have similar developments such as Bandon Dunes in Oregon, and the Kohler courses in Kohler, Wisconsin. Generally speaking, my experience is that most golf courses do not take advantage of the innate characteristic of community development through golf; a missed opportunity for sure. Most courses are left to support themselves on the merits of their designs, unique attributes of location and property, or pricing structure. In the end, for a variety of economic and social factors, most municipal courses end up breaking even at best, or more often, end up losing money. All the while, the course and its infrastructure continue to deteriorate.

Nationwide, courses are looking for reasons to invest into this asset, while also increasing their ability to market their community to prospective residents or businesses. Not surprising, most investments have been put off due to lack of support for allocating budget dollars towards an amenity that loses money. Our Community Links concept however, creates a paradigm shift in the way your golf course is viewed, tells a story of the importance of the game of golf, and demonstrates how a golf facility can be better utilized as a valuable community asset.

A Community Links facility is much more than a renamed golf course; it's an opportunity for a community to focalize the specific values important to them, which creates a stronger community. It allows for everyone in the community to come together to learn, grow, establish healthy habits, and cultivate positive attitudes. Integrity, discipline, etiquette, patience and sportsmanship are the valuable lessons a Community Links strives to instill into the local youth. Beyond that, healthy living and an appreciation for nature is duly promoted.

The societal benefits of harmony and good will rarely happen without *intentionality*. It's up to the community leaders to establish the vision of what makes their community a positive one, to put a plan in place, and to then see it through to fruition. The same concepts apply to a golf facility.

The benefits of the Community Links Concept can best be summarized in three equally important parts; social, economic, and environmental.

**Social Benefits-** Community Links emphasizes *all* members of the community, not just golfers.

- Links residents to each other and to the facility, breaking down the traditional view of how a golf course can be utilized.
- Promotes health and wellness through exercise and “prescriptive” activities.
- Promotes nature through walking trails and other non-golfing activities.
- Emphasizes youth development and character building.

**Economic Benefits-** Community Links emphasizes bringing in more revenue.

- More golfers can be brought in by updating the facility to a unique and affordable option in the area, focusing on families, kids and beginner golfers.

- New golfers can be brought in by focusing on the practice areas and establishing new player programs.
- Non-golfers can be brought in by establishing versatile auxiliary areas/ activities; walking trails, community open space, picnic areas, dog-park near concessions, corporate events, farmers' markets, concerts, weddings, etc.
- Advocates cost reduction through sustainable initiatives (see below).

**Environmental Benefits-** Community Links emphasizes responsible use of resources.

- "Fast and Firm" playing conditions that use less water and inputs.
- Irrigation upgrades and other improvements to save water, energy, money.
- Turf reduction where appropriate reduces maintenance costs and saves water, energy, money.
- Promoting "zero waste" to reduce the facility's overall footprint and sets a good example for the community.

Great communal facilities that don't drain the coffers and are environmentally responsible are what all residents want and expect from their amenities. Staples Golf believes the Community Links Concept does just that!

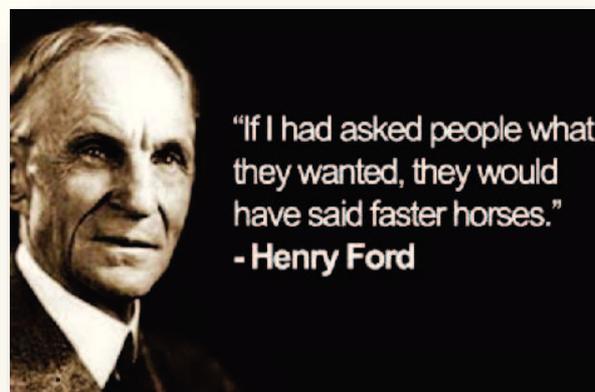
If re-branding to a Community Links is to be considered, it is important to understand what a strong brand does and how it could greatly impact your facility well into its future. Your brand is basically the way your customers, or in this case, your community, perceives your facility, and ultimately the area in which they live. Perhaps most importantly, your brand establishes the ethos, and the DNA, of what you are trying to portray today, tomorrow, and into the foreseeable future. It is the guiding light for management, staff, and for the patrons of your facility. Confusion in messaging will rarely come up when a strong brand has been established. The brand is the emotional tie between your property and the community and it should not be over looked. "Brand-loyalty" is not just some marketing buzzword; it's is the foundation of high percentage repeat business, and strong word-of-mouth referrals. It's the difference between a possible customer, and a definite one. By establishing a Community Links as your brand, *great golf, healthy living and family-oriented fun* will automatically come to mind.

## What is a Master Plan?

A Master Plan, developed with an outside, non-biased perspective, is a written and graphic document identifying issues, problems, and areas of opportunity at the facility and serves as a roadmap for future improvements.

To more fully understand what a Master Plan is, it is often useful to explain what a Master Plan is not:

- It is not change for the sake of change
- It is not an excuse to spend money
- It is not a haphazard collection of certain individuals' ideas



One may ask, "Why do a Master Plan?" It is indeed because golf is a business! Real issues continue to affect the entire golf industry today, and will continue on into the future. Rising costs, new competition, deteriorating conditions, and even safety issues due to the longer distances a golf ball travels, all weigh heavily on the idea that golf is a business. These are verifiable reasons why a golf facility needs to be ready to address these issues and invest for the future.

**Fact: Changes will be made to the facility by staff.**

Most golf facilities have some form of a governing body in charge of caring for the long term health of the asset. They are charged with allocating budgets, proposing improvements, and ensuring the overall quality of the course is maintained. It is prudent to have a plan in place that addresses these changes and directs staff when projects are implemented. Proper planning has proven to reduce costs and ensures projects are done right the first time.



*An example of a tee built as an after-thought*

**Fact: All parts of a golf course naturally evolve and change mostly for the worse.**

As outlined in the Expected Life Cycle of Golf Course Items, it is shown that components of a golf course do have a life expectancy and will deteriorate over time. This life expectancy is also directly related to how well these items are maintained.

# GOLF COURSE ITEMS EXPECTED LIFE CYCLE

**HOW LONG SHOULD PARTS OF THE GOLF COURSE LAST?**

No two golf courses are alike except for one thing: deferring replacement of key items can lead to greater expense in the future, as well as a drop in conditioning and player enjoyment. The following information represents a realistic timeline for each item's longevity.

Component life spans can vary depending upon location of the golf course, quality of materials, original installation and past maintenance practices. The American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) encourages golf course leaders to work with an ASGCA member, superintendents and others to assess their course's components.

ITEM	YEARS
Greens (1)	15 – 30 years
Bunker Sand	5 – 7 years
Irrigation System	10 – 30 years
Irrigation Control System	10 – 15 years
PVC Pipe (under pressure)	10 – 50 years
H.D.P.E. Pipe	40 – 60 years
Pump Station	15 – 20 years
Cart Paths – asphalt (2)	5 – 10 years (or longer)
Cart Paths – concrete	15 – 30 years (or longer)
Practice Range Tees	5 – 10 years
Tees	15 – 20 years
Corrugated Metal Pipes	15 – 30 years
Bunker Drainage Pipes (3)	5 – 10 years
Mulch	1 – 3 years
Grass (4)	Varies

**NOTES:** (1) Several factors can weigh into the decision to replace greens: accumulation of layers on the surface of the original construction, the desire to convert to new grasses and response to changes in the game from an architect's standpoint (like the interaction between green speed and hole locations). (2) Assumes on-going maintenance beginning 1 - 2 years after installation. (3) Typically replaced because the sand is being changed – while the machinery is there to change sand, it's often a good time to replace the drainage pipes as well. (4) As new grasses enter the marketplace – for example, those that are more drought and disease tolerant – replanting may be appropriate, depending upon the site.

ASGCA thanks those at the USGA Green Section, Golf Course Builders Association of America, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and various suppliers for their assistance in compiling this information.

The materials presented on this chart have been reviewed by the following Allied Associations of Golf:







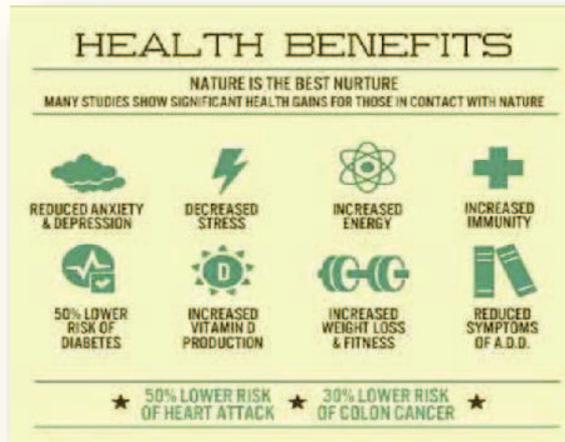


**For more information, contact ASGCA at (262) 786-5960 or visit [www.ASGCA.org](http://www.ASGCA.org)**

DATA COMPILED BY ASGCA, 125 NORTH EXECUTIVE DRIVE, SUITE 302, BROOKFIELD, WI 53005

**Fact: Due to a nationwide trend of the reduction of played rounds, diversification of a golf facility is a proven and viable option.**

A typical golf facility is traditionally utilized by only 10% of the community. However, all courses will need to look toward the 90% of those who do not play the sport, but are looking for the added benefits a golf course provides. The health of residents, youth especially, is becoming more front and center, and seen by many local governments as an issue they should be addressing where possible. Updating the facility to bring in non-golfers, and to promote health oriented, outdoor recreational options is a wise move going forward.



**Fact: The costs to operate a facility and the likelihood of additional restrictions levied on these facilities are only increasing.**

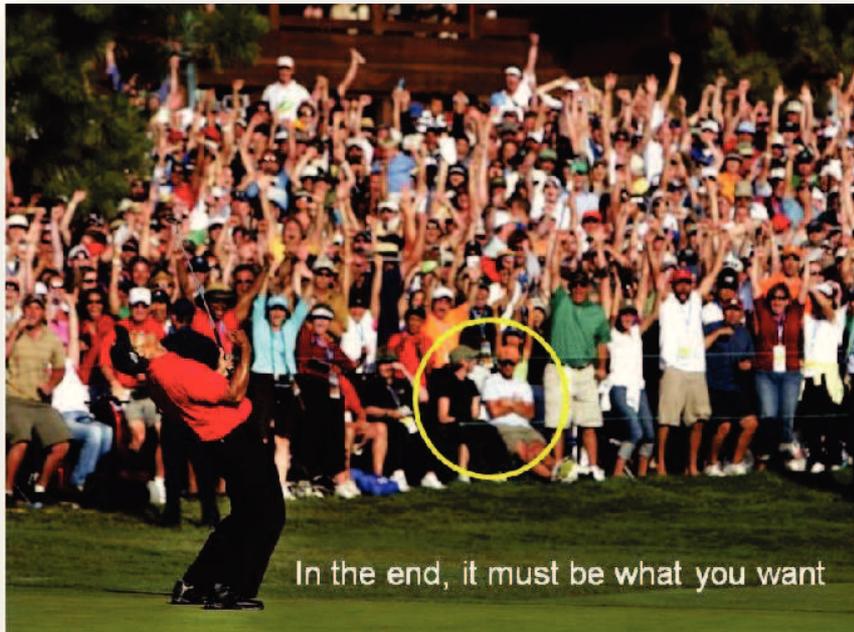
As the costs for resources such as water, energy, and fuel continue to rise and become less available, all golf facilities will need to become increasingly aware of how to address their future sustainability. Courses are already having to make unprecedented compromises in order to secure their future success. A Master Plan looks for opportunity to reduce water and chemical use, improve maintenance efficiency and do its part to secure long term sustainability.



*How much will our resources cost in the future?*

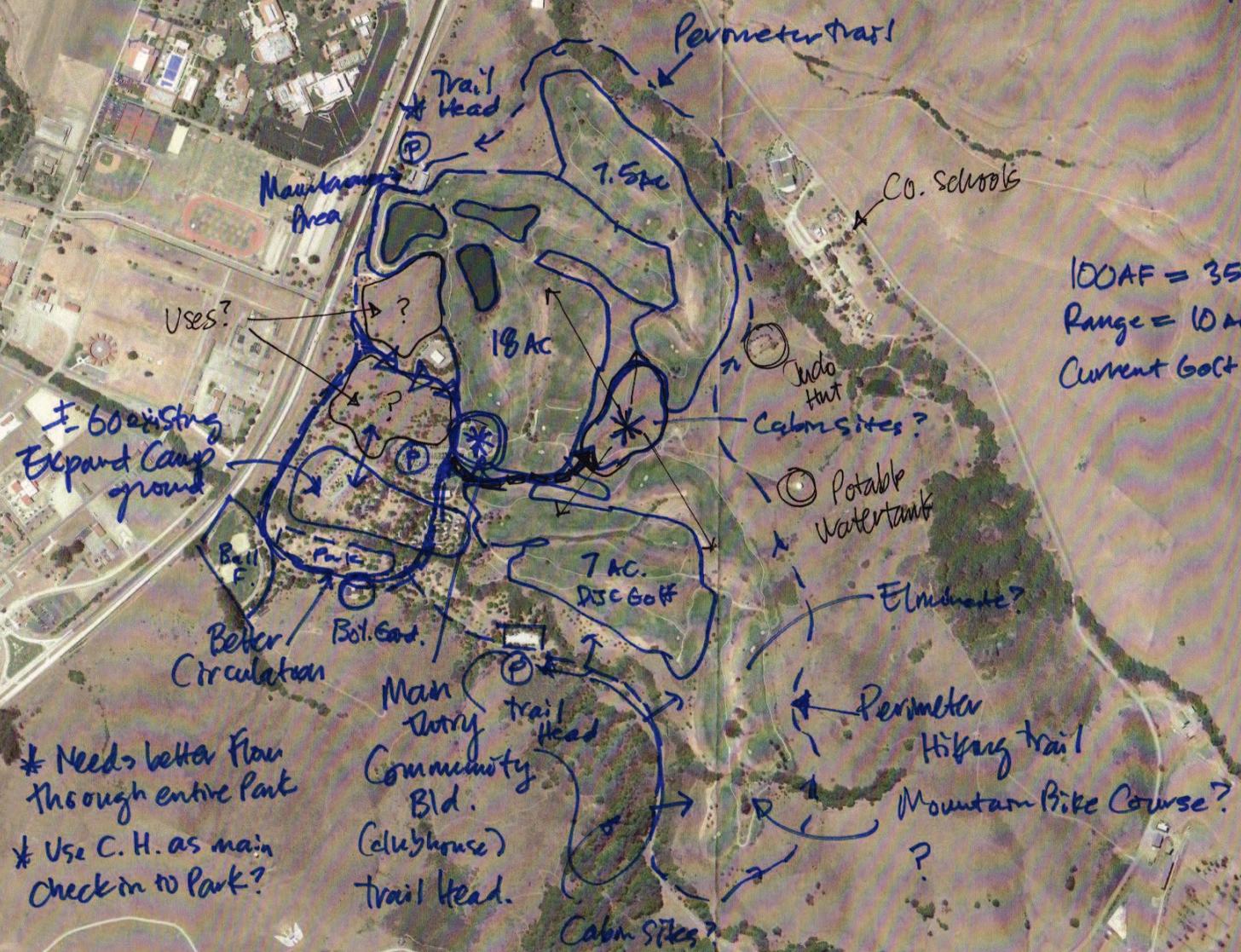
**Fact: Without a firm direction or plan, a golf facility will slowly lose its continuity over time, negatively affecting the long term health of the asset.**

So, as an answer to why a facility should have a Master Plan in place, it's very simple; a facility needs a plan to account for the changes that occur naturally, and to direct officials and staff when they plan to make changes, to positively affect and preserve the long term health of the entire golf facility.



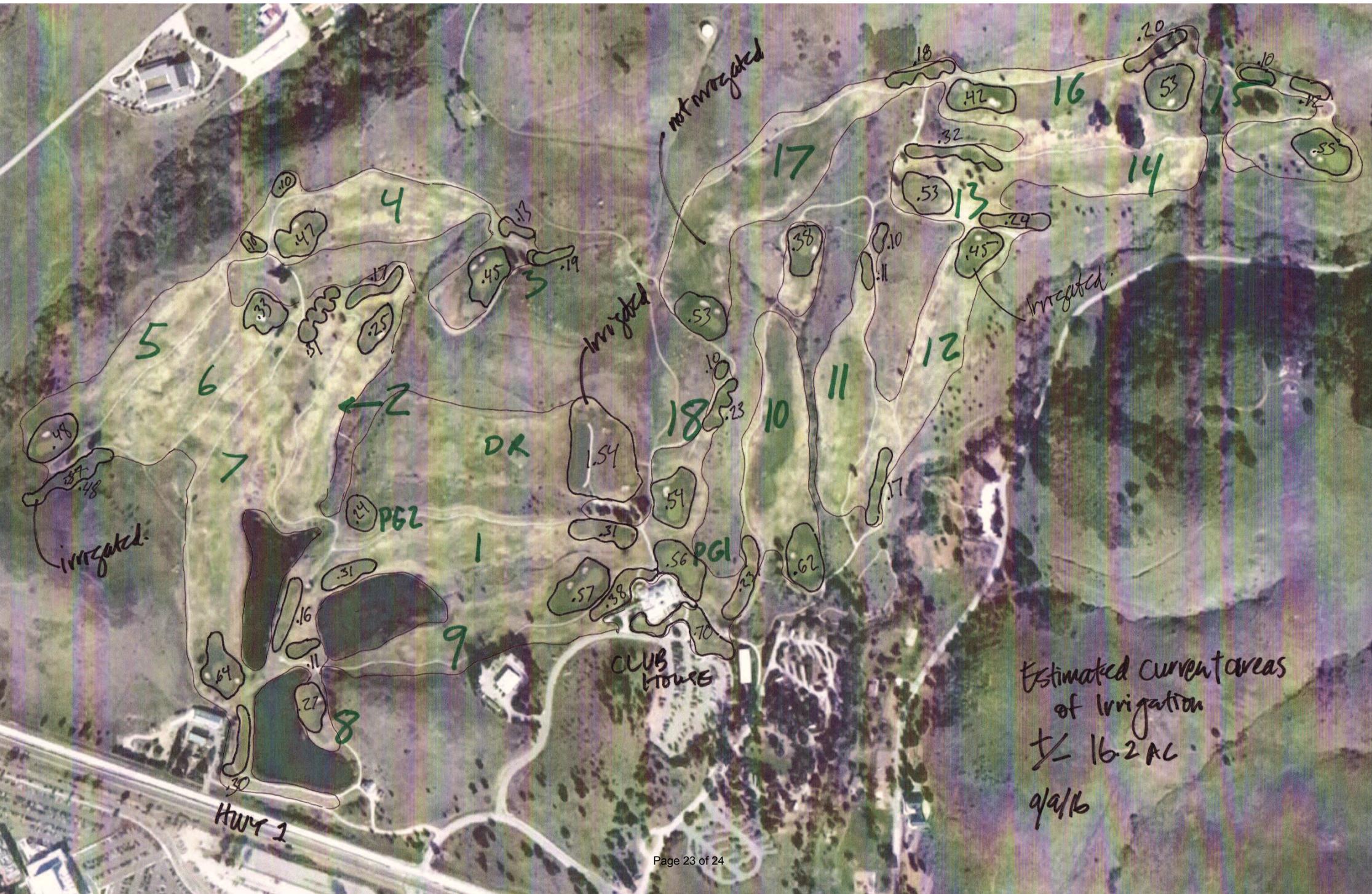
Attachments.

EL CHORRO COMMUNITY LINES  
Site Notes 8/22/16



100AF = 35-40 ac of turf.  
Range = 10 ac. (artificial turf?)  
Current Golf Course = 89 ac of turf.

\* Needs better Flow through entire Park  
\* Use C. H. as main check in to Park?



Estimated current areas  
 of Irrigation  
 $\pm$  16.2 AC  
 9/1/16

