Hello Rio Grande Chapter!
Hope everyone is safe and doing well.

On July 22nd, the board had our second virtual “GoToMeeting” trying to have some sense of normal. But what is normal today? We are a very social organization due to our job and our peers. We are in an industry that demands that we interact with our employees and our guest to insure we are providing a golf experience that our budgets allows. Having canceled our March, then May, then July chapter meetings, and then unfortunately our Annual Meeting in October, it is very unsettling to me and I am sure most of you. No one can fully comprehend the far reaching effects this crazy Covid-19 era has imposed and will impose going forward.

MEETING CANCELED

Due to the continuing situation with the Coronavirus the RGGCSA has decided to cancel the October 19th meeting at Twin Warriors.

Sorry for any inconvenience this may cause.

We are essential workers who are not in the spotlight but all of us in the industry should be commended for providing an outlet for some sense of normal. We are able to provide social distancing, fresh air (if no fires are burning) and a safe environment for recreation. Once the courses opened in New Mexico, all that came to play appreciated the effort put forth by my staff to be ready and the level of safety concerns by all at the golf shop.

Continued on next page
The added level of concern for all of us is very high and will continue to be going forward. The latest press conference from the governor on Thursday September 10th did not offer at this time any new relaxation of the NMHO but there seems to be some light at the end of this long tunnel.

As some of you may have heard from your sweater folder side at work, Dana Lehner Sub Country Golf House Executive Director, has tendered a letter of resignation and is stepping down after 15 years of service to both SCSPGA and SCAGA. Dana was the one who approached our Matt Urban about the joint meeting we held last year at Sandia with SCSPGA and SCAGA. Dana was also at the forefront of putting golf in a place with BMP’s enabling the Governor Lujuan and her appointed advisory committee to check the box so all of us could open back up for business back in May of this year.

Dana was easy to work with and he has a passion for getting things done in the best interest of golf and his accomplishments over the past 15 years are exemplary. He will be missed! He has stated he is not leaving the business or the Sun Country region. A big thank you Dana for all you have done for the PGA and for us on the amateur side of golf. More about Dana’s big move on page 14.

Without a physical annual meeting life will go on and the Board of Directors elections for 2020 will happen. A request to the chapter for self or peer nominations has been sent out. Please take the time to reflect and see if there is time for you or someone you know to step up and serve the chapter in this capacity. Stay safe.

Jimmy Rodriguez
It was mid-March, COVID-19 was starting its bloom across the US, and I had just attended an emergency managers meeting. The biggest concern on my mind at that time was trying to make it until June with the toilet paper that we had on hand. The great TP drought of 2020 was here, and I was kind of worried.

On Friday, March 20th, we decided to pull all the rakes, ball washers, divot caddies – the common touch stuff. That was a good call because the governor shut down golf the following Monday. With the shutdown order came the half-staff mandate. Do not get me started on that stupid BS. Social distancing is maximized on the golf course – we can have 14 acres per person of separation! Whatever. We are a crew of seven (myself included), so 3.5 labor units have a lot to do in a week. I know that just about everybody reading this went through the same thing; many of you probably had it much worse.

We split the crew. I got two guys and our assistant got two guys, and we rotate one week on and one off. We cannot split a mechanic, so he has Tuesday and Thursday off. I thought we would be able to get some projects done while we were closed. Made sense at the time, but then it got warm and things started to grow. The place was starting to lose its golf course form, so it was time to mount the mowers and cut grass.

May 1st arrived, and we were able to open the golf course for play. Any project work quickly went out the door when we had to start prepping the course for play, still with only 3 staff members.

Continued on page 5
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Mike Ickes
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Everybody became a mower. I have not spent this much time on a mower in 20 years. We mow. Find time to do some irrigation checks, then go mow. Weedeating? Yeah, right. Our bunkers are playing true to the definition of a hazard this year – they are garbage. We are lucky to stir the dirt once a week with everything else there is to do. My green speeds might have been sweet 50 years ago, but the greens will survive the pandemic even if I do not.

Now it is September and we are still stuck in this COVID mess. The whole summer feels lost. Instead of trying to move forward and get better, we spent the whole summer just protecting the asset. Our goal now is just to survive this season and hope the next one is back to normal. There is also a strange mixture of pride and shame – the crew has really worked hard this summer when they are here, and the golf course isn’t too bad, and there is great pride in that. The shame comes from spending a season going sideways – not a familiar direction.

One thing that has really bothered me about this whole experience is I don’t feel I have learned anything, at least anything important. I have learned that politicians are terrible people, and golfers don’t care what is going on in the world as long as they can keepspanking whitey. As far as the pandemic goes, it never really spread where I live, but we still had to suffer needlessly through this time. I have no idea what will happen in the future, and I gave up trying to predict when all this might end a long time ago. I do know this: next time the TP supply looks low at the store I am going to buy a bidet.
On recent USGA Course Consulting Service visits, multiple superintendents have shared that turf health, playability and water use efficiency improved once the agronomic team transitioned from scheduling irrigation based on run time minutes to depth of water applied. Here are a few tips on how to pivot toward scheduling irrigation based on a specific depth of water rather than run time minutes.

The biggest obstacle is often the discrepancy between sprinkler precipitation data in the central computer and what is applied in the field. One superintendent noted that over 27 holes, two assistants spent last summer inspecting each sprinkler and correctly updating the precipitation rate in the central irrigation computer. An irrigator followed to perform any necessary nozzle upgrades, head leveling or replacing of internal drives. It is essential to have accurate precipitation rate data in the central computer.

The computer software will determine the run times based on precipitation rate and the desired depth of water. If the precipitation rate is incorrect, there is no hope of applying the desired amount of water.

Once the computer has up-to-date and accurate precipitation rate data, scheduling irrigation events can shift to the desired depth of water. Use evapotranspiration (ET) data from an on-site weather station to help determine the appropriate water depth. Depending on the time of year, superintendents will use a crop coefficient that will range from as low as 0.5 or 50%, up to about 0.8 or 80% of ET. Individual fairways may require different crop coefficients depending on shade, orientation to the sun, or soil type.

For example, in late fall when the sun is lower in the southern sky, fairways that are oriented east to west with trees south of the fairway might be programmed at only 50% of ET, while fairways receiving greater sunlight exposure may be programmed at 60%-70%. The beauty is that the computer will determine the appropriate run times to deliver the desired percentage of ET as measured by the weather station. Occasionally, it is beneficial to schedule deep watering events, especially in arid regions that don't have the benefit of much precipitation. In such cases, superintendents can input 0.75 inch, for example and the computer will adjust run times to deliver this depth of water.
One superintendent shared an example where sprinklers near a green surround were programmed in minutes, usually around 12-minute run times, for quite some time. After shifting to ET-based scheduling, the run time in this area increased to 26 minutes. Turf quality and performance has improved substantially. There are other examples where ET-based scheduling significantly reduced run times, especially during the fall, winter and early spring months.

I hope this article encourages you to consider using ET-based scheduling rather than what many courses have historically relied on, which is scheduling irrigation in minutes of run time. While there may be considerable time required to accurately update the computer, it will be time well spent!

Best wishes to all and please do not hesitate to contact your regional USGA agronomist for more information on these strategies or any other agronomic practices. The USGA article “ET-Based Irrigation Scheduling” is also a valuable reference for more information on this subject.
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NMSU turfgrass expert honored by Crop Science Society of America
New Mexico State University Regents Professor Bernd Leinauer has been nominated and elected as a 2020 Fellow of the Crop Science Society of America.

The award is presented for outstanding contributions to crop science through education, national and international service, and research. The fellow designation is the highest recognition bestowed by the Crop Science Society of America and only 0.3 percent of the members have an opportunity to be elected as a fellow.

Leinauer has been with NMSU since 2000 as the turfgrass specialist in the College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences Cooperative Extension Service.

"As an Extension specialist, I am especially honored to receive this award, because it recognizes my Extension efforts and dedication to assisting the turfgrass industry as well as our research efforts in urban water conservation," Leinauer said. "I also want to thank my exceptional team because such an accomplishment is the result of years of hard work by the entire turfgrass team, and they deserve equal credit."

The award is especially noteworthy because Leinauer has already been awarded American Society of Agronomy Fellow in 2017. Being recognized as a fellow by two separate societies is an accomplishment that very few scientists achieve.

"Bernd has developed a highly successful research and Extension program that has established him and his team as among the leading researchers and Extension experts in the overall field of turfgrass water conservation," said Rolston St. Hilaire, department head of NMSU’s Plant and Environmental Sciences. "The Department of Extension Plant Sciences is pleased that he is being recognized for his contributions to the turfgrass industry."

Leinauer received his master's and doctoral degrees from Hohenheim University in Stuttgart, Germany.

He is internationally recognized as an authority on water management strategies aimed at reducing potable water usage on turfgrass. His research includes the screening of low water use, cold and salt tolerant turfgrasses, maximizing irrigation system efficiency, irrigation with saline water, and subsurface irrigation.

Leinauer has authored or co-authored a book, a book chapter, and 90 peer-reviewed publications.

He provides leadership at the international, national and state levels. He has been invited to present his research findings nationally and internationally and has served as invited keynote speaker at several international meetings.

In addition to his work for NMSU, he also holds the endowed turfgrass chair position at Wageningen University in the Netherlands.

Leinauer will receive his award virtually, as the National Agronomy Meeting scheduled to be held in Phoenix from Nov. 8-11 is being converted to an online format.
The 2021 Golf Industry Show is going virtual.

Amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, GCSAA announced today that the annual education conference and trade show will be presented in a virtual format instead of the previously planned in-person event in Las Vegas.

The decision was made in conjunction with GCSAA’s presenting GIS partners, the American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) and the Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBAA). The organizations say the virtual event will offer an experience that continues the Golf Industry Show’s long tradition of connecting attendees, exhibitors and industry experts through a week of unparalleled educational opportunities and access to golf facility solutions for industry professionals.

In addition to the education, trade show and special events that will take place live on the virtual platform the first week of February, attendees will also have the option to view or review all content from the show for an extended period after the event concludes.

The theme of GIS 2021 — “Your space. Your pace. All in one place.” — not only reflects the ability of participants to attend the show from the safety of their homes or offices and consume the content when they want to, but also speaks to the convergence of industry experts that is a hallmark of GIS and will remain so in the virtual format.

Registration for the 2021 Golf Industry Show will open Oct. 13 on the Golf Industry Show website.
GIS 2021: Q&A with GCSAA CEO Rhett Evans

GCM sat down with GCSAA CEO Rhett Evans to discuss the move to a virtual GIS, the reasons behind it, what attendees can expect, and what the future might hold for other upcoming conferences and trade shows.

Q: At the time of this interview in early August, we’re six months out from the scheduled dates for an in-person GIS 2021. Why did GCSAA decide now was the right time to make this decision?

A: The short answer is that it was simply the right thing to do — for our members, our exhibitors, our GIS presenting partners, and our staff who work so hard to plan and execute the Golf Industry Show each year.

As any organization that conducts an event as substantial as GIS would do, we have been carefully monitoring the situation, tracking its effect on the event and trade show industry, and gathering feedback from GCSAA members and longtime GIS exhibitors. In addition to planning for an in-person event in Las Vegas, we were working concurrently on several contingency plans, all with the safety, health and comfort of all GIS attendees at the forefront of our thinking.

As we entered the month of August, circumstances made it clear that now was the time and that an all-virtual event was our best course of action. The pandemic remained a source of great concern for all of our constituents, and it was clear that concern would likely continue into the new year. Additionally, several other prominent events we had been watching closely — most notably, the 2021 Consumer Electronics Show and the 2020 GIE+EXPO — announced that their events would either go virtual (in the case of CES) or be postponed (in the case of GIE+EXPO).

We were also cognizant of the need to give time for all involved to adjust and plan for any changes to GIS that we might need to make. When you take all of that into consideration, it became clear that transitioning to a virtual event was our best option, and the time to make that decision was now.

Q: You mention the contingency plans you had been considering during GIS 2021 planning. Why was an all-virtual event selected as the best scenario to pursue?

A: As we began to plan in earnest for GIS 2021, all in the midst of the pandemic, we felt it prudent to work concurrently on other potential scenarios for the event. Those ranged from a normal, in-person GIS, to a hybrid event that would offer both in-person and online offerings, to an all-online, virtual conference and trade show.

We ultimately decided on the virtual-event option, because it was clear it was the one that best took into account the clear preferences of our members and exhibitors while still offering those groups an experience they would find valuable, educational, interactive and profitable.

Q: What factors and feedback were considered in the decision-making process?

A: We kept close tabs on national developments in the event and trade show industry, with a specific eye on Las Vegas and the state of Nevada. To assist in that effort, we engaged with a veteran trade show consultant to guide us through the process and offer his analysis on trends and best practices that were available to us.
Lawrence, Kan. (Aug. 4, 2020) -- The 2020 Rounds 4 Research fundraising program to support turfgrass studies, administered by the Environmental Institute for Golf (EIFG), sold out of all 997 rounds of donated golf and yielded nearly $265,000 in its July online auction, marking the first time all rounds were sold since the program launched in 2012. The EIFG is the philanthropic organization of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA).

The auction was originally scheduled for April 27-May 3 but was postponed to July 20-26 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. And while the number of rounds donated and the amount of total funds raised were also affected by the pandemic, the results of the rescheduled auction show the game and program remain popular.

“We are delighted with the results of the 2020 auction, and it exceeded our expectations in light of world events,” GCSAA CEO Rhett Evans said. “Rescheduling it was the right thing to do, and we knew some courses would no longer be able to make donations. However, the fact that all rounds sold and we greatly exceeded our goal are evidence of the popularity of golf in today’s world and the strength of the R4R program.”

The Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association raised $50,907 and was the leader among more than 64 GCSAA affiliated chapters and turfgrass organizations that received proceeds from the auction to support turfgrass research at the local level. The Florida GCSA was next with $29,981 raised for its chapter.

The top bid was $10,009 for a one year membership with full member privileges to six private clubs in the Dormie Network.

The national campaign is supported by a $50,000 donation from The Toro Co. The program has raised more than $1.7 million since it began.
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Lehner leaving Sun Country to join Paa-Ko Ridge GC

Dana Lehner is stepping down after 15 years as the executive director of the Sun Country PGA, the Sun Country Golf Association, the Sun Country Junior Golf Association and U.S. Senior Challenge to become the director of operations at Paa-Ko Ridge Golf Club.

Lehner has been a key figure in the progress of the Sun Country Golf House’s entities and highly instrumental in golf reopening in New Mexico during the coronavirus pandemic this year.

“It’s bittersweet,” said Lehner, who will officially leave his post in three weeks. “I’m extremely excited about my next step but I’ve also taken the opportunity to reflect on the last 15 years. It really does nothing but bring a smile to my face. I’m extremely proud of everything that we did. I feel like, while I didn’t get everything accomplished that I wanted to, I think all the entities are really set up to take off from here. I’m excited for the next person who comes in.”

A nationwide search for the Sun Country’s executive director will now take place.

Lehner and his staff put in a great deal of work so that golf could reopen in New Mexico after courses were closed for about a month in April. That work also included managing how to operate at golf courses during the pandemic and relations with the Governor’s economic recovery council.

Good luck Dana! You have been a great friend and resource for the RGGCSA. We really appreciate all of the great work you have done and look forward to seeing you at Paa-ko Ridge Golf Club.
Evaluating bunker locations helped the USGA Green Section in remedying pace-of-play issues that have plagued the industry for so long. (Photo courtesy of the USGA)

When it comes to nonprofit organizations, more than half fail between their first and fifth year of existence. Not so for the 126-year-old United States Golf Association (USGA), which celebrates the centennial of its Green Section this year, despite the survival-of-the-fittest backdrop.

But, alas, there's barely any time for reflection within USGA's ranks. While it isn't totally reinventing itself, the Green Section is busier than ever (and that's saying something) as it artfully adapts to the industry's most pressing needs.

"The USGA Green Section has constantly evolved its programs and services to address golf’s ever-changing needs, so it’s in our DNA to continue meeting the challenges of tomorrow," says Senior Managing Director of Public Services Rand Jerris. "Our willingness and ability to evolve is grounded in a deep sense of purpose to serve the game, the golf courses who are our customers and their collective needs."

Those collective needs have shifted drastically over the past decade as public and private golf courses strive to operate more effectively and efficiently with maintenance budgets—and staff—that are under constant pressure to do more with less.
After all, through its unwavering, four-prong mission of research, education, consulting and outreach, no organization has had a more profound impact on the golf experience than this elite group of agronomists and data scientists.

**A merger in the making**

In 2017, the USGA's Research, Science and Innovation Group (RSI) rolled out the first version of its “Facility Tool” to help courses with the beleaguering pace-of-play issue that’s haunted the industry for so many years.

Small GPS loggers were placed on golfers at several courses to track their movements on foot and in carts. Movement patterns were overlaid with variables like green speed, rough height and bunker locations. As a result, operators could visualize how these elements impacted the speed at which golfers moved through the course.

Early on, however, the RSI Group discovered a powerful, ancillary benefit: The Facility Tool could also help courses identify underutilized sections of turf that could be removed without affecting play. It was first deployed at Crandon Golf Course in Key Biscayne, Fla., in concert with architect John Sanford, and resulted in a master plan that could ultimately save Crandon $350,000 annually.

It was this successful foray into turf territory that helped lead to the merger of the Green Section with the RSI Group in the fall of 2019. With this brand-new and expansive platform fortified by data-driven decision-making, the new-look Green Section has leveled up for its next 100-year era.

"We can now provide more sophisticated technology tools to speed and increase the reach of transferring knowledge and expertise into the field," Jerris says. "We don’t see this as a new direction but rather enhancing and improving our capabilities, so we can deliver even more impact for golf courses for the next 100 years.”

Continued on next page
Green Section and RSI Managing Director Matt Pringle adds, “The fall of 2019 really offered us a pause and juncture to reflect on our 100th year of serving the golf industry and to ask ourselves where to go from here. There was a prevailing sentiment around our consulting service that it was too expensive for your average public. That’s not the case, and we needed to change that perception through education and outreach.”

**Thinking small**

Including multimillion-dollar research projects and major championship preparations, the Green Section has quarter-backed numerous high-profile projects over the years. But, Chris Hartwiger, longtime director of course consulting, believes data-driven “micromodels” that benefit a wide variety of facility types will be a major focus of the section in the coming years.

“It’s not about big data. It is about collecting the right data from facilities that helps them make decisions,” Hartwiger says. “The more courses you participate in modeling, the easier it becomes to identify trends and patterns.”

(Photograph courtesy of the USGA)
have participating in this modeling, the more patterns and trends start to emerge.”

For example, in 2018, Hartwiger and USGA agronomist Addison Barden posed a seemingly simple question: What do good putting surfaces have in common? The answer, as it turned out, was much more complex.

The duo embarked on a project with six courses in the Southeastern U.S. to gain scientific clarity and develop a methodology for superintendents to employ within their existing maintenance budgets. The performance indicators were green speed and clipping volume, while inputs included fertilizer, weather, mowing and rolling.

“We’re up to 21 courses participating and hope to add more this year,” Hartwiger says. “The charts and graphs help superintendents visualize green performance over time, and spreadsheets allow them to model for different variables. Collectively, the information enables them to provide golfers a more consistent putting surface over time.”

Similarly, the Green Section has developed a model to assist courses with the timing and budgetary impact of aerating greens. Facilities in destination regions, like Myrtle Beach and Hilton Head, S.C., have historically avoided punching putting surfaces anytime close to the spring or fall peak season. While such a practice makes common sense, it doesn’t necessarily make scientific or economic sense.

“Aerating greens in winter months leads to longer recovery time, which can have an even greater effect on revenue,” Hartwiger says. “With the model, a course can enter any date, and it will generate the number of days needed for recovery.”

To continue reading the article on Golfdom, Click Here
The RGGCSA Alan Salter Scholarship offers a minimum $500 award to the children and grandchildren of RGGCSA members for educational aid. The award is administered by the RGGCSA Board of Directors.

Applicants will be reviewed by the RGGCSA Scholarship Committee. All decisions of the committee are final. Applicants will be notified of their status by mail before March 15, 2021. All scholarship awards will be sent directly to the recipient upon submission of proof of registration for the Spring 2021 semester.

Eligibility:

• At least one of the applicant's parents or grandparents must be a currently active RGGCSA member in good standing.

• The applicant must be enrolled full-time at an accredited institution of higher learning, or in the case of high school seniors, must be enrolled at such an institution for the next academic year.

Application Deadline: December 1, 2020
• Graduating high school seniors must attach proof of enrollment to their application.

• Only fully completed applications will be considered.

• Minimum cumulative 3.0 GPA required.

Criteria:

• Applicants will be evaluated based on academic achievement, extracurricular and community involvement, leadership and outside employment.

• Relevant work experience and field of study to the golf/agriculture industry is recommended, but not required.

• Financial need is not a factor in the selection of this award.

Application Process:

• Fully complete the scholarship application form.

• Include a minimum 250 word essay.

• Include a copy of their most recent academic transcript.

• Include two (2) letters of recommendation from non-family members.

• Include a current resume.

All application materials should be returned by registered mail to:

RGGCSA Alan Salter Scholarship
P.O. Box 121766
Fort Worth, TX 76121-2766

Application Deadline: Completed scholarship applications and accompanying information must be postmarked no later than December 1st, 2020
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