



OPERATOR'S CORNER

In this space you will find articles targeted at the many different types of NGCOA Canada members. We will provide informative materials focused at different times on small operators, private facilities, resort operations and premium-priced courses, among others. We hope in this way we will be able to give operational tools relevant to specific segments of the golf industry.

ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES FOR RESORT AND MULTI-COURSE OPERATORS

How ClubLink manages environmental issues and the bottom line

ClubLink has always taken environmental issues very seriously and over the past decade, has strived to be an industry leader in environmental management practices. As Canada's largest owner and operator of golf course and resort properties, ClubLink Corporation recognizes its business is intrinsically linked to environmentally sound and responsible golf course operations and management.

The corporation has demonstrated its commitment to the environment through a number of initiatives, including the development of a corporate Environmental Policy, company-wide participation in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary program (10 golf courses fully certified) and many partnerships with non-governmental agencies such as Ducks Unlimited. These initiatives have earned ClubLink recognition from several local conservation authorities for environmental leadership.

It is important for golf course operators to protect their interests by getting involved in the process. With properties at 32 locations, ClubLink is very active at both the local and provincial levels, participating on various environmental committees, developing and sharing innovative best management practices.

ClubLink's strong presence in Ontario has provided an opportunity to participate in industry-related policy issues such as watershed management, source water protection and planning, water taking and pesticide management. Through our involvement in industry associations, we have established strong working relationships with staff at local conservation authorities, health units and the Ministry of the Environment.

WORK WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Establishing these partnerships has been beneficial at many of our development projects. While building the Mark O'Meara Course at Grandview Golf Club in Ontario's Muskoka region, for example, we worked directly with Ducks Unlimited to maintain wetland habitat on the course. This partnership is highlighted by interpretive signage placed around the property.

In addition, we developed an agreement with the District of Muskoka to collect treated effluent from a nearby district sewage treatment plant to use for our irrigation needs.

A significant environmental development is the use of off-line irrigation reservoirs to store runoff collected from the

spring melt and storms. These reservoirs, which are not in play as golf features, allow us to save water for the drier months and reduce our reliance on water taking from other sources.

Conservation authorities and the Ministry of the Environment now strongly encourage that reservoirs be built into water management strategies. ClubLink has been constructing them since 1999 and many of our clubs have been built or retrofitted with reservoirs.

With ClubLink's size, the company can afford the services of a full-time Manager of Environmental Operations rather than relying on contracted services. Having a full-time position devoted to environmental management means ClubLink remains current on regulatory issues facing the industry and it can develop policies to adapt accordingly.

TAKING THE INITIATIVE ON DRINKING WATER

For example, post-Walkerton, ClubLink became increasingly aware that the provision of safe drinking water at our clubs with private water supplies is a critical component of our daily operations. Well before the Safe Drinking Water Act came into effect, ClubLink installed treatment

equipment at all its clubs on private wells that served the public. We also implemented a rigorous water sampling protocol. This has allowed us to effectively and safely manage our drinking water issues.

ClubLink also has the financial and technical ability to provide managers at our individual clubs with resources to help them adapt to changes in this heavily-regulated environment. In addition, ClubLink has the advantage of an internal network of 32 properties that allows knowledgeable and experienced managers to discuss challenges and solutions that face our industry.

A HIGHER STANDARD

Over the past several years, ClubLink has invested millions of dollars to upgrade its water management strategies to include irrigation reservoirs, fixed intake structures and monitoring equipment.

In many instances, these measures were proposed to the government agencies in the approval process well ahead of our industry counterparts. However, we have also experienced instances where these measures have been overshadowed by minor deficiencies that arise in a site inspection. Being held to a higher standard is a part of our reality.

A common misconception is that large corporations have endless amounts of money to spend on their operations. It is common for agency representatives or environmental stakeholders to infer that cost should not be an issue to ClubLink. While ClubLink is a profitable company, capital expenditures must still be prioritized accordingly because the corporation is accountable to its shareholders. Therefore, we are always looking for innovative and cost effective ways to maintain and enhance our environmental management practices.

Environmental management is a critical component of golf course operations. Water taking, the use of pesticides, fuel storage and the provision of safe drinking water are all issues under scrutiny by government agencies and environmental stakeholders.

As a multi-property operator, ClubLink recognizes that it must take an active role in remaining current on regulatory matters and innovative best management practices while working cooperatively with industry representatives and partners to protect the golf course industry's interests.



WENDY BURGESS

Wendy Burgess is the Manager of Corporate Environmental Policy and Operations with ClubLink Corporation. She is responsible for all of ClubLink's environmental programs. She is a graduate of Queen's University in Geography. Wendy can be reached at wburgess@clublink.ca.

ClubLink is Canada's largest owner, operator and developer of golf course and resort properties.