USGA Media Center

LIBERTY CORNER, N.J. (Dec. 4, 2020) – The United States Golf Association (USGA) has embarked on a new collaborative body of work in its ongoing efforts to sustain the economic and environmental viability of golf courses and improve the golfer experience – elements critical to golf's future.

Driven by the global release of the February 2020 Distance Insights Report and independent from a review of equipment standards, the work focuses on evolving the game's approach to factors such as golf course setup, maintenance and tee placement/selection, while improving golfer satisfaction and reducing course operating costs. It will be led by a team of experts within the USGA Green Section with collaboration from several national golf organizations.

"This critical work has implications for the entire game – from golfers to architects to course operators, as we come together to solve golf's challenges, including the present and future availability of land, increasing scarcity of water, and the growing capital costs owners face as they feel the pressure to lengthen their golf courses," said Mike Davis, CEO of the USGA.

Over time, the work will mature into industry-wide recommendations and best management practices designed to serve and benefit golf courses and golfers. Outcomes will be released throughout 2021.

"Many golfers and golf courses already are directly impacted by longer rounds and increasing costs, and our research shows that many of our public courses are facing real economic challenges related to golf course maintenance that are simply unsustainable," Davis added. "Through active industry collaboration championed by the USGA, combined with the direct input of golfers and golf course operators, this work will provide guidance on best practices as we chart an economic and environmental path in which the game can thrive."

Current and ongoing work will build upon research delivered earlier this year related to increased playing distance and the documented lengthening of golf courses over time. As owners feel the pressure to lengthen courses, they face significant capital expenditures and larger areas to maintain, which have contributed to increased maintenance costs. At the same time, other published research shows that only 8 percent of U.S. golf courses offer a shorter playing length that would correspond to an average driving distance of about 150 yards. This work aims to provide guidance and solutions to address those issues moving forward.

The USGA Green Section is working with representatives from many of golf's leading organizations – including the American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA), Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBAA), Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) and PGA of America (PGA) – to advance the outcomes of this project.

The working teams are dedicated to golfer-centric programs such as golfer segmentation, performance, on-course golfer experience and decision-making, with additional research dedicated to field studies of golfer behavior across every level of the game. Additional efforts are focused on golf course-related factors such as course conditions, resource usage, use of available forward tees, design and setup effects, and projected golf course capital costs.

Celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, the USGA Green Section continues to deepen its commitment to improve the quality of the on-course golfer experience and reduce the consumption of critical resources by golf courses around the world. Leveraging its agronomic expertise and applying technology and data to its efforts, the Green Section is singularly focused on promoting and ensuring the health and vitality of the game for the next century and beyond.

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