



“The long-term economic and environmental sustainability of green-grass golf courses – where more than 25 million people enjoy the game and millions more are employed – will be challenged in certain regions if the game doesn’t advance this critical work now.” - Mike Whan, CEO of the USGA

LIBERTY CORNER, N.J. (April 20, 2023) – The United States Golf Association (USGA) is accelerating its work toward a more sustainable game with the deployment of a multi-year, multi-million-dollar investment toward reducing golf’s use of water.

The organization’s \$30 million commitment over the next 15 years will advance underutilized strategies and technologies that golf courses can use to economically reduce their use of water, a vital and increasingly regulated natural resource with near- and long-term cost and availability concerns. The work will focus on irrigation optimization, advanced conservation innovation and water sourcing and storage.

“The long-term economic and environmental sustainability of green-grass golf courses – where more than 25 million people enjoy the game and millions more are employed – will be challenged in certain regions if the game doesn’t advance this critical work now,” said Mike Whan, CEO of the USGA. “We are enthused and impressed by the reductions golf course superintendents have pursued over the past decade, and even more optimistic about the future. The USGA is ready to not only contribute our voice, but also our resources and expertise, to help our golf course partners and ensure golf’s future.”

The effort will integrate the longstanding industry leadership of the USGA Green Section – composed of agronomists and turfgrass experts – with university researchers, golf course owners, superintendents, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), regional golf associations, architects, industry partners and water agencies.

Over the next 15 years, the USGA, along with industry allies and practitioners, will:

- Launch and continuously update a water resilience playbook for the game of golf
- Demonstrate underutilized and emerging, research-based practices
- Understand and break down barriers to adoption of proven strategies (including financial barriers)
- Continue to support water resilience research and turfgrass breeding programs

The work toward greater water resilience propels many of the current and emerging practices employed throughout golf, which have already contributed to a 29-percent reduction in golf’s use of water from 2005-2020 (Golf Course Environmental Profile, GCSAA, 2022). The USGA’s initiative will build on that benchmark, with the goal of more widespread adoption nationwide.

“The move toward greater water resilience requires everyone in golf to actively participate and bring their best efforts forward, with golf courses utilizing the assets available to them within their geographic region,” said Matt Pringle, Ph.D., managing director of the USGA Green Section. “Importantly, this is not about mandates, but an important call to action to the golf industry to work together towards a common goal.”

The proactive planning process is being led by Cole Thompson, Ph.D., who leads the USGA’s Davis Grant Program via annual research grants, and Matteo Serena, Ph.D., a leading expert in water conservation in the Southwest who joined

the USGA last summer.

The USGA is partnering in 2023 with golf courses on numerous field projects that are designed to show where and when the water conservation potential of a strategy outweighs the investment and disruption required for implementation. For example, research supports that drought-tolerant grasses use approximately 20 percent less water than commonly used varieties, depending on location and grassing scheme, and installing them typically pay off in five to 10 years.

With a goal of identifying early adopters, the USGA will continue to collaborate in a series of water summits in several states (three have already been held in California) along with its Allied Golf Associations, as it seeks to draw the best talent and innovations toward the program's goals.

The organization will also work together with golf courses on sharing best practices and innovations that could be more widely adopted to advance program goals.

More information on water and golf courses can be found at www.usga.org/greensection.

About the USGA:

The USGA is a nonprofit organization that celebrates, serves and advances the game of golf. Founded in 1894, we conduct many of golf's premier professional and amateur championships, including the U.S. Open and U.S. Women's Open. With The R&A, we govern the sport via a global set of playing, equipment, handicapping and amateur status rules. The USGA campus in Liberty Corner, New Jersey, is home to the Association's Research and Test Center, where science and innovation are fueling a healthy and sustainable game for the future. The campus is also home to the USGA Golf Museum, where we honor the game by curating the world's most comprehensive archive of golf artifacts. To learn more, visit www.usga.org.

About the USGA Green Section:

Since the founding of the Green Section in 1920, the USGA has led the effort to enhance golf course sustainability. Through research and services to courses that enable improved playing conditions, these efforts are aimed at reducing the consumption of critical resources such as water, chemicals, labor and energy. This mission is achieved through five primary programs – research, course consulting services, technology tools, championship agronomy and professional education and outreach. The USGA's annual investment of \$10 million in science, research, agronomy and course consulting efforts is estimated to provide more than \$1.9 billion in savings to U.S. golf courses each year. These savings are realized through more efficient water, fuel, labor and nutrient management practices all while supporting improved playing conditions, for the good of the game.

For further information: Janeen Driscoll, USGA Communications, jdriscoll@usga.org

<https://mediacenter.usga.org/press-releases?item=123012>