



**USGA**® COURSE CONSULTING SERVICE

# Site Visit Report

## **The Views Golf Club at Oro Valley** Oro Valley, Arizona

Visit Date: August 25, 2026

Present:

Michael Kropf, Golf Course Superintendent  
Rick Price, Director of Golf  
Brian Whitlark, USGA Green Section

Brian Whitlark | Regional Director, West Region | (480) 215-1958 | [bwhitlark@usga.org](mailto:bwhitlark@usga.org)

**USGA**GreenSection

# Executive Summary

Thank you for your hospitality and the invitation to return to The Views Golf Club at Oro Valley for a Course Consulting Service visit on behalf of the USGA Green Section. It has been 12 years since my last visit, and I was impressed by the results of the greens construction and bunker renovation project. Both have improved the golf experience and simplified agronomy operations. This visit focused primarily on the putting greens, specifically the pros and cons of overseeding, while also covering other areas of the golf course. A brief summary follows.

- **Putting greens.** I will outline the pros and cons of overseeding. I continue to recommend not overseeding greens to maximize the number of good golfing days throughout the year. We will also discuss aeration program modifications to minimize disruption to play.
- **Fairways and approaches.** Although not perfect, bermudagrass recovery from overseeding (transition), at The Views was better than at most golf courses in Southern Arizona this year. We will discuss transition, weed control, and future overseeding.
- **Tees.** A tee renovation is planned for next year and is highly recommended because the tees are sloped and undersized. Consider upgrading to Tahoma 31 or TifTuf bermudagrass.
- **Roughs.** Continue not overseeding the roughs. The primary topic for these areas is weed control.
- **Bunkers.** The bunker renovation has been very successful, and compliments are due to all involved. Include sand replacement in the long-range capital replacement program.
- **Labor.** The Views has only 12 full-time staff, including the golf course superintendent, assistant, and mechanic. Ideally, increase this total to 16. Also consider a maintenance day so the agronomy team can complete important tasks. Given the limited staff, consider a trial with at least one autonomous mower for three to six weeks.

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# Putting Greens

## Observations

### 1. New TifEagle Greens Superior to Old TifDwarf Putting Surfaces

I was pleased to see the putting greens rebuilt since my last visit in 2012. The greens were constructed with flat drainage pipe on the subgrade, 10 inches of sand, and resurfaced to TifEagle ultradwarf bermudagrass. Some greens were relocated, and all were reshaped to improve playability. These changes created more hole locations and improved turf health. The results have been very successful. Congratulations to all involved!

### 2. General Conditions

The greens were aerated with 3/4-inch solid tines on a 2-inch by 2-inch spacing about three weeks before the visit and have healed well. They are in excellent health with good density. The prism gauge measured an effective height of cut of about 0.115 inches, while the reported bench setting is 0.125 inches. Field height of cut is typically slightly lower than the bench setting. Ball roll was good and will continue improving as the greens smooth after aeration.

### 3. Soil Profile

Soil profiles collected from the greens revealed a 3- to 4-inch layer that has accumulated over the original construction sand. This layer contains a healthy mixture of sand and organic matter.

- I observed no excessive thatch or surface organic matter. To confirm this, the USGA sent sample kits, and the team collected samples before the visit. Brookside Laboratories analyzed the samples for organic matter concentration. Those results are included below.
- All three greens tested at The Views have lower organic matter concentration in the top 2 centimeters than the national average. This is good and demonstrates the aeration and sand topdressing programs coupled with low nitrogen inputs are working as desired.
- It was good to see that roots extend to a range between 4 and 6-plus inches in greens and there are no limiting layers.

BROOKSIDE LABORATORIES, INC.

\*\* PHYSICAL ANALYSIS REPORT \*\*

United States Golf Association  
Green Section  
Liberty Corner, NJ 07938

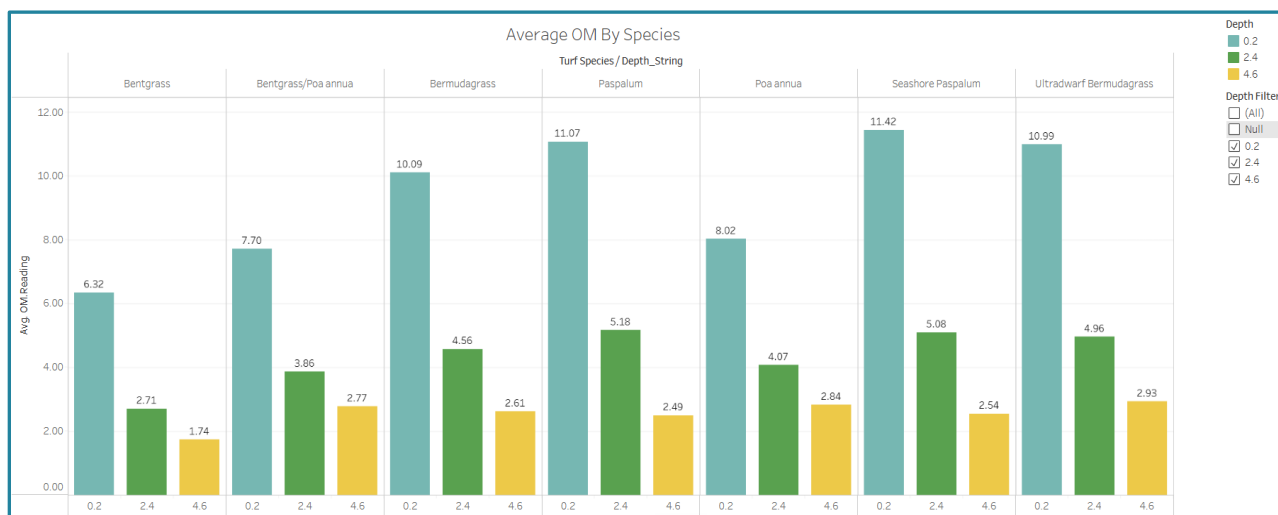
Submitted By: Home Office

File Number: 82872  
Date Received: 08/18/2026  
Date Reported: 08/26/2026

SAMPLE LOCATION: THE VIEWS - SUN CITY

| NBR | FIELD    | DESCRIPTION | OM 440 |          |
|-----|----------|-------------|--------|----------|
|     |          |             | As     | Rcvd (%) |
| 056 | GREEN #4 | 0-2         |        | 9.51     |
| 057 | GREEN #4 | 2-4         |        | 5.92     |
| 058 | GREEN #4 | 4-6         |        | 3.70     |
| 059 | PG       | 0-2         |        | 10.28    |
| 060 | PG       | 2-4         |        | 7.25     |
| 061 | PG       | 4-6         |        | 3.96     |
| 062 | GREEN#11 | 0-2         |        | 10.71    |
| 063 | GREEN#11 | 2-4         |        | 5.99     |
| 064 | GREEN#11 | 4-6         |        | 4.10     |

Putting green organic matter concentration at 0-2, 2-4 and 4-6 centimeters.



This chart portrays the national average for putting green organic matter concentration for common turf species. Note for ultradwarf bermudagrass, the national average in the top 2 cm is 10.99%.

#### 4. Firmness

I used the USGA GS3 device to measure firmness on No. 11 green. Although the greens are sometimes reported to be firm and difficult to hold shots, they were soft and receptive during the visit. Average firmness was 0.490, softer than the average bermudagrass greens I typically see.

- For further guidance on the putting green firmness values, please review the article [The GS3 Ball: Understanding the Numbers](#). The ranges provided here are taken from this article:

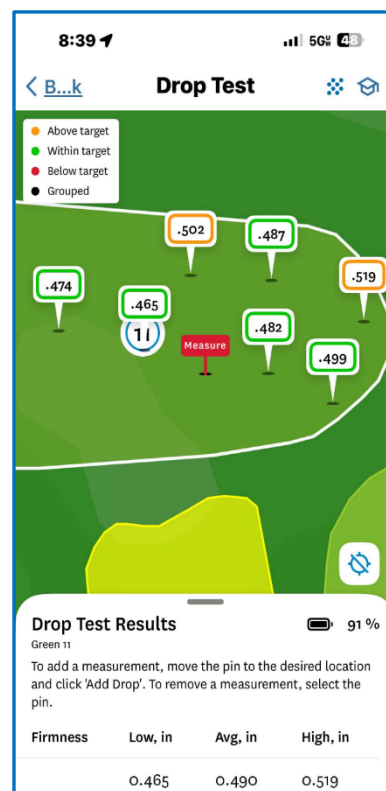
Typical Range of Values: 0.300" – 0.500"

- 0.300" – 0.350" Extremely Firm
- 0.350" – 0.400" Firm
- 0.400" – 0.500" Likely suitable for most facilities
- >0.500" Receptive

#### 5. Surface Strength

I used a surface strength tool with a torque wrench to measure the force required to tear the top 3/4 inch of the putting green surface.

- For bermudagrass, I prefer values of at least 15 Newton meters (Nm). Values below 15 Nm, especially below 12 Nm, indicate a weak surface susceptible damage from ball marks and golfer traffic.
- All values collected during the visit were at least 15 Nm and typically ranged from 15 to 17 Nm.



I utilized the USGA GS3 device to measure firmness on No. 5 green. Values, on average, were 0.493 inches, which indicates a soft and receptive surface.



**Left:** Roots are healthy in greens and extend to over 4 inches. **Right:** The shear strength numbers were good, with values ranging from 15 to 17 Nm.

## 6. Grain

Grain is the amount of leaves, stems, and stolons growing horizontally along the putting green surface. I used a pitch mark tool to stand up and measure this material. These TifEagle greens had minimal horizontal growth. The agronomy team have done a fine job with routine vertical mowing and sand topdressing.



It was good to see no indication of an excess amount of bermudagrass stems, stolons, and leaves growing horizontally along the surface of the greens. This means minimal grain.

The recommendations below modify the aeration schedule and slightly adjust the vertical mowing program. First, the overseeding discussion.

## Overseeding Discussion

### 1. Overseeding Pros and Cons

Many golf courses in Southern Arizona and Palm Springs have upgraded to ultradwarf bermudagrass, similar to the TifEagle at The Views. These grasses can provide quality putting surfaces with or without overseeding, and either approach can be successful. The trend in Arizona and Palm Springs is toward not overseeding. The motivation is not cost savings but providing excellent putting surfaces for as many days as possible throughout the year. Most agree that not overseeding offers the best chance to achieve this goal. The pros and cons of both approaches follow.

#### Overseeding Pros:

- **Winter growth.** Overseeding provides actively growing turfgrass during the coldest winter months, allowing greater control of green speed than on nonoverseeded greens. Most golfers also prefer the appearance of overseeded greens, although this is purely subjective.
- **Smoothness.** Ball roll may be smoother on overseeded greens in some cases, but nonoverseeded greens can be equally smooth. With good management, the data shows the difference in putting green smoothness is nominal.

#### Overseeding Cons:

- **Rapid blight disease.** Rapid blight is a major threat to overseeded turf. The most recent reclaimed-water test showed total salinity slightly above 1.2 dS/m, high enough to favor rapid blight. The *Poa trivialis* seed used for overseeding is highly susceptible. If you overseed, Mr. Kropf and his team will need to flush greens with up to two hours of irrigation as often as every two weeks and use a robust fungicide program to minimize disease risk.
- **Poor playing conditions within six weeks after overseeding.** Playing conditions are poor for roughly the first six weeks after overseeding. The greens are wet, soft, and slow. This occurs at all golf courses that overseed greens.
- **Potentially poor transition.** Overseeding bermudagrass creates a risk of poor recovery. From May through July, an awkward phase can occur as the overseeded grass begins to die before the understory bermudagrass has fully recovered.
- **Risk of poor overseed.** Overseeding always carries a risk of poor conditions from storms soon after seeding, irrigation issues, or other factors that affect the density and health of the new turf.
- **Cost.** Any savings from not overseeding putting greens is minimal. I discourage using cost savings as the reason not to overseed.

### NOT Overseeding Pros:

- **More good golfing days.** The primary benefit of not overseeding is better putting greens for more days each year. This is especially true in fall, when overseeded greens are at their worst and nonoverseeded greens are arguably at their best in September, October, November, and early December. Nonoverseeded greens can also be excellent in late spring and early summer while overseeded greens are transitioning.
- **No rapid blight risk.** Many Southern Arizona golf courses stop overseeding to eliminate rapid blight risk. The disease affects the overseeded turf, not bermudagrass.

### NOT Overseeding Cons:

- **Challenges with slopes.** On steep putting greens during a very cold winter, limited growth can reduce the agronomy team's ability to control green speed, and surfaces can become excessively fast. Your new greens have gentle slopes, so I do not expect excessively fast speeds to be a problem on nonoverseeded surfaces.
- **Limited recovery from hole plugs.** Old hole plugs have limited to no winter recovery. The team must change holes carefully to maintain a level surface, but damage will remain on the down-grain side of the plug. Recovery may be limited for six to eight weeks, although ball roll may not be affected. Products used to color the greens will not hide these scars. This condition is far worse on some greens with more elongated material than what you will see at The Views.
- **Smoothness.** Winter ball roll was not ideal last year. Lower mowing heights significantly improved putting green smoothness. This winter, continue mowing at 0.120 to 0.130 in. through the winter months.

## **2. Overseed Summary**

From an agronomic standpoint, The Views can produce good playing conditions with or without overseeding. The nonoverseeded model is more predictable and, in my opinion, provides better conditions on more days throughout the fall, winter, and spring. After our visit, the leadership team decided to not overseed putting greens. I believe this is the right choice.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Modified Aeration Program**

Move the disruptive May aeration event to early July, after the 4th of July festivities, and add a second event four to five weeks later in early to mid-August. These two events can achieve the agronomic goals. July and August heat and humidity will speed recovery, and these are typically the least-played months of the year. This also creates an opportunity for better putting greens in late May and June, when weather is better for golf. For both aeration events, consider the following:

- Apply 0.3 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet about one week before aeration.
- Immediately before aeration, conduct vertical mowing with 2-mm carbide-tip blades at approximately 0.150 inches below the bottom of the rollers. Use the backtrack method, running the vertical mower up and back on the same pass and changing directions three times for six total passes.

- Blow debris before applying sand.
- Apply 600 to 800 pounds of sand per 1,000 square feet before aeration.
- Ideally, make the first pass with a deep-tine aeration machine using 3/4-inch solid tines on a 4-inch by 4-inch spacing, penetrating 7 to 8 inches deep.
- Immediately follow with the first aeration pass using the Toro® Procore machine equipped with 5/8-inch outside-diameter tines on a 2-inch by 2-inch spacing.
- Immediately make a second pass at a 30 degree offset from the first. Some courses make a third pass with smaller-diameter tines, but I do not believe this is necessary at The Views given the surface thatch and organic matter levels.
- Apply one or two additional sand topdressing events to completely fill the holes to the surface. This is critical for a smooth surface after the greens heal.
- Roll the greens extensively to smooth.

Repeat this process for the second aeration event in August. Widen the spacing for the second pass if necessary. Some courses also reduce the depth of the second pass to avoid heaving if this is a concern.

Observations and a more rigorous research project have shown that making two, three, or four passes over the greens does not extend healing time compared with one pass. Healing depends more on hole diameter than the number of holes.

## 2. Routine Vertical Mowing

Switch to the thinner 1-mm vertical mowing blades for routine vertical mowing during the growing season. It was good to hear that the team increases light-intensity vertical mowing in March, continues through late October or early November, and generally stops when the greens show little growth.

# Fairways and Approaches

## Observations

### 1. Better Transition than Most

Bermudagrass recovery from overseeding (transition) has been worse this year than the previous two to three years across the Desert Southwest.

- No golf course superintendent I have met with believes transition this year was as good as the previous two or three years; all agree it has been worse. Even so, **bermudagrass transition at The Views was better than most.**
- I recently wrote an article published in the *USGA Green Section Record* titled [Still Transitioning](#) which goes into greater depth on this topic, but suffice it to say that the transition at The Views has been better than at most golf courses in Southern Arizona and in the Coachella Valley. Many courses purchased enough sod to plant multiple acres this summer.

## 2. Goosegrass Pressure

For reasons I cannot explain, goosegrass pressure has increased at golf courses throughout Southern Arizona over the past three or four years, including at The Views. Goosegrass is a prolific seed producer, so most control must come from preemergence herbicides.

Goosegrass pressure has increased in the past few years across Southern Arizona, and it is the most problematic weed at the views.



## 3. Weak Bermudagrass Recovery in Approaches

Localized areas in the approaches have not recovered from overseeding as well as the fairways. These areas were affected during construction, when 4 to 5 inches of sand was installed and sod containing a clay layer was placed on top. The sand has very poor water- and nutrient-holding capacity, and the sharp soil texture change between the sand and clay has severely restricted root development. Contrast that to the healthy rootzone in fairways after years of sand topdressing.



**Left:** This rootzone in the approach on green No. 15 contains a coarse sand with very poor moisture and nutrient retention, and the sod contained a heavy clay layer and is performing poorly. **Right:** Years of sand topdressing have yielded an improved rootzone in fairways.

## 4. Improved Rootzone

Since my last visit, sand applications to the fairways have created an improved rootzone that supports healthier turf. A 4-inch mixture of sand and organic matter now overlies the native soil. This zone contains dense, healthy roots and provides better aeration, porosity, and water movement than the native soil below.

## Recommendations

### 1. Bermudagrass Transition

Consider the following adjustments to the bermudagrass transition program. The agronomy team at The Views has used penoxsulam (Sapphire®) for years and was an early adopter. This has been one of the keys to your success:

- Initiate Sapphire applications in the first or second week of March at 4 ounces per acre every two to three weeks for four applications through late April or early May. Then increase the rate to 8 to 10 ounces per acre for two applications about two weeks apart. If necessary, apply Kerb® at 30 ounces per acre in June to remove lingering ryegrass and annual bluegrass.
- In mid-April, increase nitrogen fertility and apply at least 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet from mid-April through the end of May to encourage bermudagrass recovery. Use a simple nitrogen source such as urea or ammonium sulfate.
- Begin lowering mowing heights in early February and set fairways, approaches, and tees at 0.300 to 0.450 inches.
- Use a spring-tine rake, light-intensity vertical mower, and/or brushes every two to three weeks from March through May to stand up the ryegrass.
- Conduct slicing or small-diameter solid-tine aeration in April and May to improve water infiltration and expose the understory bermudagrass to sunlight.

### 2. Preemergence Goosegrass Control

For goosegrass control on the overseeded fairways and approaches, consider the following:

- Apply prodiamine (Barricade®) in late January/early February to establish a preemergence control barrier.
- Follow with granular oxadiazon in late April/early May when the five-day average soil temperature reaches 67° at the 2-inch depth.
- About eight weeks later, apply StriCore®. Make a second StriCore application about six weeks later.

These products are safe on perennial ryegrass and understory bermudagrass and should provide a robust preemergence barrier against goosegrass. Control will not be perfect, but the goal is greater than 90%.

### 3. Aeration and Sand Topdressing Program

As with the greens, shift the most disruptive fairway practices into July and August.

- Based on observations during the visit, the fairways could benefit from an aggressive vertical mowing event in July or August. Many courses have been successful by combining vertical mowing and a spring-tine rake to stand up the bermudagrass, followed by scalping.
- Scalping is typically done at 0.300 inches. Aesthetics will be disrupted briefly, but the bermudagrass will recover rapidly, improving playability and turf health. Completing this process in August also simplifies overseeding preparations.

# Tees

## Observations and Recommendations

### 1. General Conditions

The same tee issues discussed during my 2014 visit remain today. The tees are undersized and have significant crowns that create uneven lies. Many are also oriented away from the line of play. A tee renovation offers significant room for improvement.



The silver tee (left) and the white/gold tees (right) are much too small to heal from heavy golfer use. The white and gold tee also suffers from shade from the nearby mesquite tree.

### 2. Tee Renovation

Move forward with plans to work with golf course architect Mike Gogel and renovate the tees. Based on conversations with Mr. Kropf, I strongly support the planned changes to significantly enlarge, level, reorient the tees with the line of play, and resurface them.

- A useful guideline is at least 100 square feet of teeing area for every 1,000 rounds a tee receives. For example, if the white tees receive roughly 40,000 rounds per year, the tee should be at least 4,000 square feet. Increase par-3 tees by 150% to 200% beyond this guideline, especially on short par-3 holes where short irons are used.
- Another guideline is to make par-3 tees at least 15 to 18 paces wide. Extra width allows tee markers to move front to back and side to side, extending the useful service life of the tee.
- When resurfacing, consider TifTuf, Tahoma 31, or Coachella bermudagrass. Each would upgrade Tifway 419 or TifGreen 328 by providing a denser surface with improved leaf texture. These grasses have also shown better recovery from overseeding.
- Agronomically, the tees ideally would not be overseeded their first year. However, this may not be practical, especially on par-3 holes. If the bermudagrass has roughly 60 days to root before overseeding, proceed with overseeding the tees. If it is less mature, consider overseeding only the par-3 tees or short par-4 holes where irons are used.

# Roughs

## Observations and Recommendations

### 1. General Conditions

Mr. Kropf reported that, with the nitrogen load in the reclaimed water, the roughs have not received fertilizer in many years. Despite this, they are healthy, have good color, and are in good condition. Bermudagrass performs remarkably well in this climate without the stress of overseeding. Like the fairways, the roughs have heavy goosegrass pressure and some purple nutsedge. Mr. Kropf noted that the team have done a great job controlling broadleaf weeds.

### 2. Weed Control

There are more weed control options in the rough than on the overseeded fairways.

- Use prodiamine (Barricade) before mid-September to help control early-emerging *Poa annua* and other cool-season weeds. Follow with a second application in late November combined with a postemergence product such as Tribute® Total to provide both preemergence and postemergence control.
- If Tribute Total is a concern near overseeded fairways, consider banding the fairways with StayGuard™, which provides both preemergence and postemergence control. Expect some phytotoxicity on the bermudagrass.
- Apply glyphosate at 12 to 14 ounces per acre at least twice, near the end of December and again in mid-January.
- Apply indaziflam (Specticle®) in late March to provide a robust preemergence barrier against warm-season grass weeds such as goosegrass.
- Add protection in June with StriCore® and make two applications spaced six weeks apart.

# Bunkers

## Observations and Recommendations

### 1. Renovation Success

I was very impressed with the bunker renovation. Bunkers have been a major topic over the past decade, and many courses are pursuing similar projects. The goals are to reduce overall bunker area, simplify maintenance, improve playability, and make bunkers easier for golfers to enter and exit. This renovation achieved all of these goals. Compliments to all involved.

### 2. Sand Replacement Planning

Include bunker sand replacement in the capital improvement plan. Bunker sand typically needs replacement every seven to ten years. Given the cost, set aside funds in advance so they are available when replacement is needed.

Congratulations to all involved with the bunker renovation process! The results have achieved all the goals to ease maintenance and improve playability.



## Labor

### Observations and Recommendations

#### 1. Minimal Agronomy Staffing

The Views has only 12 full-time agronomy staff, including the golf course superintendent, assistant, and mechanic. This is a very small team for the property.

- The team have done a great job, but limited staffing combined with numerous shotgun starts and 1- and 10-tee starts prevents important maintenance tasks from being completed. Morning time is largely consumed by mowing and setting up the golf course for play.
- There is little time for important cultural practices, spray applications, and irrigation management. **It is recommended to work towards 15 to 16 full-time staff for this golf course.**

#### 2. Maintenance Closure

Consider scheduling a maintenance day, or at least a hybrid version. Many private courses close one day per week for maintenance, and it is not always Monday.

- On a closed day, the maintenance team can work 10 to 12 hours and complete substantially more work through greater operational efficiency. Nearly the entire team at The Views is needed each morning to set up the course for play. Without play, that labor can shift to other important maintenance tasks, greatly increasing efficiency.
- Many courses use a hybrid approach. From May through the overseed window, the course closes one day per week. After overseeding through sometime in May, the course uses a delayed tee time, such as 11:00 a.m., with play starting from one tee only. Earlier, we discussed shifting disruptive aeration into July and August and opening more golf in May and June. This provides more good golfing days during better weather than July and August and may make golfers more willing to accept a hybrid closure day.

### 3. Autonomous Mowers

This year, I estimate that over 60% of the courses I have worked with use some form of autonomous mowing. These machines can mow key areas more routinely and shift labor to other important maintenance tasks. Given the limited staff at The Views, consider autonomous mowing for green surrounds and perhaps extend into the roughs.

Most courses begin with one or two units so staff and members can become comfortable with their operation around play. The technology is no longer experimental, but a meaningful learning curve remains with charging, mapping, connectivity, blade maintenance, routing, and golfer interaction. Common reasons for using autonomous units include:

- Lack of labor availability.
- Inability to keep up with bermudagrass growth.
- Rising equipment replacement costs.
- Noise ordinances near homes.
- The ability to redirect employees from mowing to detail work on the golf course.

Some superintendents have gained course leadership support by quantifying the labor required for the existing mowing operation and showing the benefits of autonomous units.

- Document acres, mowing frequency, hours per mowing, employees required, equipment hours, fuel, repairs, transport time, and annual cost. Fairways and roughs are obvious candidates because they consume substantial mowing time, but green surrounds and areas near the clubhouse are also important.
- Have the vendor map the course before buying. Evaluate satellite/GNSS reception, cellular connectivity where required, slopes, trees, bunker edges, curbs, water hazards, cart and road crossings, irrigation heads, and travel between disconnected mowing zones. Determine where machines will charge and be serviced. Recent experience shows that power distribution and charging station placement can determine overall system efficiency.
- Run a trial for at least three to four weeks. Track acres per day, errors (interventions) per 100 operating hours, downtime, charging time, blade changes, missed areas, scalping, clipping accumulation, golfer interference, and staff time required to manage the machines.
- Scale up only after the workflow is proven. Once you know how many acres one machine can realistically handle, how much staff time is required to manage it, and where charging stations are needed, expansion is easier to justify.

Here are a few additional resources on this topic:

- [How Do Robot Mowers Affect Turf Management and the Golfer Experience?](#)
- [Changing Gears](#)
- [Autonomous Mowing Technology Keeps Moving Forward](#)

## Concluding Comments

It was a pleasure to return to The Views and spend the morning with the golf course leadership team discussing short- and long-term improvements. Since my last visit, the leadership team have made excellent decisions by rebuilding the greens and renovating the bunkers, with impressive results. I hope you continue that progress with the tee renovation next year.

Regarding putting green overseeding, I prefer the less risky nonoverseeded approach because it provides more good golfing days. I recognize that some people strongly prefer overseeding, which remains a viable option, but it carries more risk. I am confident the agronomy team will produce quality playing surfaces this fall, winter, and spring without overseeding. All the best as you move toward the overseed season. I hope we can do this again next year. Thank you for your support of the USGA Green Section.

Respectfully submitted,



Brian Whitlark, Regional Director  
USGA Green Section, West Region

Distribution:

Michael Kropf, Golf Course Superintendent

# USGA Green Section

## Turfgrass and Environmental Research

The [USGA Green Section](#) appreciates your support of the Course Consulting Service. First started in 1953, the Course Consulting Service provides unbiased assessments of golf facilities to optimize resources and reduce consumption of critical resources. The proceeds from the Course Consulting Service directly support the USGA's annual \$2 million investment in [turfgrass and environmental research](#), which provides an estimated [\\$2 billion annual benefit to the U.S. golf industry](#). Follow the QR Code for more information.



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