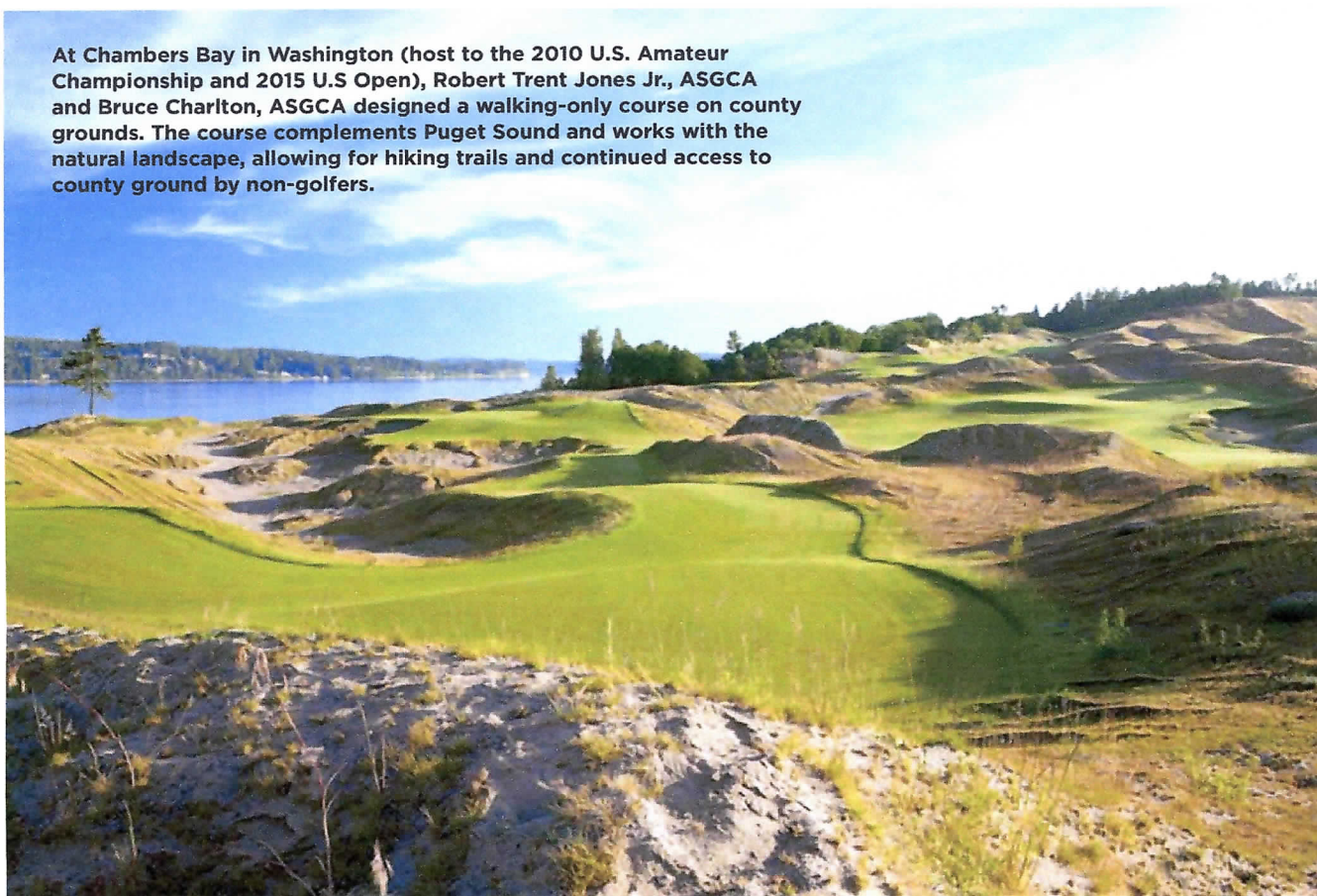


operations

At Chambers Bay in Washington (host to the 2010 U.S. Amateur Championship and 2015 U.S. Open), Robert Trent Jones Jr., ASGCA and Bruce Charlton, ASGCA designed a walking-only course on county grounds. The course complements Puget Sound and works with the natural landscape, allowing for hiking trails and continued access to county ground by non-golfers.



Golf Courses More Than a Walk in the Park

(Though they can be used for that, too)

By Mark Whitney, American Society of Golf Course Architects

Each year park and recreation officials assess the benefits afforded by every program available to citizens. They analyze the best use of land and the overall value of a program or service provided. It is no different for those responsible for the thousands of park and municipal golf courses in the United States.

What is the true value of a golf course? In a recent NRPA survey, more than 90 percent of municipal golf managers recognized that golf courses of all types provide economic, environmental, and social benefits to their communities.

The American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA)

members and golf industry partners are working together to quantify the benefits a golf course brings to its community. Economic benefits like jobs and tax resources are rather easy to put into numbers, but it is not so easy to quantify such social and health benefits as spending time with family or friends and being outdoors.

Then there are the environmental benefits. The positive environmental impact a golf course makes on a community is both tangible and powerful. "There is an inherent goodness to the community which comes from the positive environmental, financial, and social impact of a golf course," ASGCA President Erik Larsen said. "The benefits to green space, wildlife

WHY ASGCA MATTERS TO PARKS AND RECREATION

THE ASGCA, WHICH ENTERED ITS 65TH YEAR in 2011, has for decades represented the very best practices in golf course design. To become an ASGCA member a golf course architect must meet design standards for attractive, playable, competitive, environmentally friendly courses. ASGCA architects must also demonstrate the expertise to work with parks and recreation staff, golf course managers and superintendents, club owners, civic officials, builders, and more.

There are a number of criteria a golf course architect must meet to become an ASGCA member, including:

- **Design at least five 18-hole golf courses. (Most ASGCA members have designed several dozen courses).**
- **Complete a two-year application process.**
- **Have no less than eight years of practical experience in golf course architecture.**

In addition, ASGCA members abide by a stringent code of ethics. Many public agencies and entities have recognized the ASGCA membership constitutes the highest professional standards in golf course design.

How does ASGCA benefit municipal officials? ASGCA publications—including “Sample Request for Proposal for Golf Course Architectural Services” and “Golf Course Remodeling Questions & Answers”—are excellent starting points when considering how to begin a project.

The “ASGCA” designation after a professional’s name also serves as a pre-qualifier for municipalities which seek an indication of someone’s experience before bringing them on for specific projects. Most ASGCA members are even willing to conduct a site visit and make initial recommendations for a modest fee.

For more information on ASGCA members or to obtain these free publications, visit www.asgca.org or call 262.786.5960.

and plant sanctuaries, and water filtration are quite valuable.”

And the beautiful setting is intrinsic to the very game of golf. Seldom does someone refer to the “beauty” of a basketball court or a bowling center, yet the word is used regularly in regard to golf. The lush, serene setting helps players relieve stress, clear their minds, and fully enjoy their leisure time.

Making Best Use of Nature’s Most Abundant Resource

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) recently surveyed more than 16,000 golf courses. Since 1996, 96 percent of golf facilities have completed at least one environmental improvement, with 57% having implemented at least five improvements. The most common upgrade was to the irrigation system.

GCSAA also notes only 14% of golf facilities use water from municipal systems.

Each of these improvements serves a dual purpose. It improves the golf course for players while enriching the experience of others who might use the facility as walking trails, cross country skiing sites, etc. Second, such improvements provide long-term costs savings through preventive maintenance and long-term planning.

A number of regions around the U.S. were impacted by record rains during the past summer. Those rains demonstrated the extent to which many communities rely upon golf courses to help handle torrential rain and subsequent flooding. “A properly designed and maintained course provides a home for storm water, allowing for water filtration while keeping groundwater clean,” said ASGCA Vice President Rick Phelps. “ASGCA members are committed to the design and renovation of golf courses that work with Mother Nature, including designing areas for storm water retention. A well-designed and maintained course provides a positive environmental benefit to homes and businesses near the course, and the entire community.”

Communities benefit when a golf course is designed or redesigned to make the most of water – whether that water is wanted or unwanted. Two examples are:

■ **Groesbeck Municipal Golf Course, Lansing, Mich.** A vital community partner in assisting the city and township’s handling of storm water flow, thanks to a project designed by Jerry Matthews, ASGCA. Nine holes of the course were redesigned, in part, to include seven acres of storage ponds used for excess water flow during heavy storms. Today, the 30-acre wetland system, including the golf course, can handle 10 million gallons of water per day. That is the equivalent of two “25-year storms” back-to-back.

■ **Deerpath Golf Course, Lake Forest, Ill.** The golf course was routinely flooded by runoff from a nearby hospital campus until former ASGCA President Bob Lohmann and Lohmann Golf Designs (LGD) renovated the course. LGD constructed a one-acre

Whether you are out for a round with some friends, conducting formal business in a friendly, competitive atmosphere or introducing your son or daughter to a practice range for the first time, the golf course remains a truly unique place.

—Erik Larsen, President,
American Society of Golf Course Architects

retention pond and several acres of man-made wetlands to serve as an attractive, effective overflow network. Ducks, heron and egrets have since found a home at Deerpath. The wetland system is working effectively to filter the polluted off-site water before it re-enters the nearby Skokie River.

Golf Industry Economic Impact of \$76 Billion

According to research conducted by the World Golf Foundation, the economic impact of the game is equally impressive. Golf is responsible for two million jobs in the United States and each year generates \$76 billion in revenue. The golf industry employs 160,000 people in California alone, leading to a direct impact on the state's economy each year of \$6.9 billion.

NRPA members, in their survey, also highlighted the positive economic impact a golf course has on the community. About 90 percent of respondents said a golf course heightened surrounding property values, while more than 80 percent cited golf's role in creating jobs and generating sales tax revenue.

Studies indicating the positive impact green space and parks have on U.S. home and real estate values date back to 1873, when it was shown homes near New York's Central Park rose at an appreciably higher rate than those just a block or two removed from the park. Surveys show people rank open space, natural beauty, and parks as important when making home-buying decisions.

Golf course architects have worked for generations to ensure that in the process of designing fun, challenging courses, park space is preserved, the natural beauty of land enhanced, and the desires of homeowners met.

Living a Friendlier and Healthier Life...One Hole at a Time

The social and health benefits of golf deserve greater attention. "Whether you are out for a round with some friends, conducting formal business in a friendly, competitive atmosphere, or

introducing your son or daughter to a practice range for the first time, the golf course remains a truly unique place. And we can't forget the health benefits that come from being outdoors," Larsen said.

Walking a golf course leads to better health. Anyone looking for a moderately paced cardiovascular workout will benefit by walking nine or 18 holes designed around the natural undulations of the land. A recent MSN.com article cited additional benefits of walking, including lowering the risk of Type 2 diabetes, reducing stress, preventing heart disease, and decreasing patients' need for medication. ☀

ASGCA members are experienced in designing for maximum environmental benefit. The third edition of "An Environmental Approach to Golf Course Development" explains design tenets used by members. Case studies also illustrate examples of these best practices. Also, ASGCA has created a free, one-page information sheet detailing the focus placed on water and the environment. For information or to obtain these pieces, visit www.asgca.org or call (262) 786-5960.

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