

Cactus & Pine GCSA holds Town Hall Meeting to educate policymakers

Event focuses on water use and management as well as the positive economic impact that the game has on the state

The Cactus & Pine GCSA held a Town Hall Meeting on Aug. 14 at Grayhawk Golf Club in Scottsdale, Ariz. The meeting was organized to provide Arizona politicians, government agencies, municipalities, water districts, policymakers and leading water experts with a more thorough understanding of the golf industries use of water in the state, the economic impact of the game in Arizona and ongoing turfgrass research being conducted at the University of Arizona.

Featured speakers included Dr. Paul Brown of the University of Arizona, Class A superintendent Rob Collins of Paradise Valley Country Club, golf course superintendent Shawn Emerson of Desert Mountain, GCSAA Southwest field representative Jeff Jensen, Dr. Dave Kopec of the University of Arizona, Class A superintendent Phil Shoemaker of Desert Highlands Golf Club and Brian Whitlark of the USGA.



Cactus & Pine GCSA President Rory Van Poucke and Linda Rizzio from Congressman David Schweikert's office.



Dr. Dave Kopec of the University of Arizona speaking on turfgrass research efforts being conducted in the state.



Desert Mountain superintendent Shawn Emerson speaking on the economic impact of the game in Arizona.

Collins spoke on maximum water and resource efficiency with a focus on the numerous projects that have been conducted at Paradise Valley; Emerson on the economic impact of the game to Arizona and the media coverage generated by the PGA TOUR's Waste Management Open; Jensen on the water advocacy efforts of GCSAA and national economic impact of the game; Shoemaker on the private/municipal negotiations that brought recycled water to the North Scottsdale Corridor and Whitlark on proven water conservation practices for golf courses in the Southwestern United States.

Dr. Brown and Dr. Kopec spoke on turfgrass research. Brown focused on an overall perspective of water use on turfgrass in the state and irrigation efficiency/technology while Kopec covered research being conducted on more drought and salt tolerant turfgrass varieties, particularly Saltgrass.

The event was attended by over 70 participants including staff members from the offices of Arizona Sen. Jeff Flake and Sen. John McCain, staff members from Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick (AZ-01), Congressman Matt Salmon (AZ-05) and David Schweikert's (AZ-06) offices as well as numerous policymakers from local municipalities and water agencies/districts including the Arizona Department of Water Resources, Arizona Municipal Water Users Association, Salt River Project and Scottsdale Water.

“The Cactus & Pine GCSA understands the magnitude of the current drought in Arizona and the Southwest,” said Rory Van Poucke, Cactus & Pine GCSA president and general manager/Class A superintendent of Apache Sun Golf Club. “Our members are committed to reducing water use through sound agronomic practices and strategies. The bottom-line is that the Arizona golf industry is a beneficial user of water.”

Arizona is home to over 300 golf courses with a total economic impact of \$3.4 billion. Nearly 20,000 workers are employed by Arizona golf facilities with total wages in excess of \$300 million. Additionally, the golf industry is only responsible for approximately 2 percent of the state's overall water usage.

“Golf is a valuable asset to Arizona economy,” said Carmella Ruggiero, executive director of the Cactus & Pine GCSA. “We are a source of employment, provide tax revenue (nearly \$80 million annually) and serve as important recreational outlet for the community and visitors to the state. This meeting gave us a chance to showcase the importance of our industry.”

The event was the largest of numerous outreach efforts that the Cactus & Pine board of directors has conducted in the past year under the leadership of Ruggiero and Van Poucke, who will be running for the GCSAA board of directors in 2016.

For more information on the association, visit the website at www.cactusandpine.com.

