

LA RINCONADA

COUNTRY CLUB

Those of us who have lived in California for decades know that droughts come and go. We also know that being good stewards of our environment and community is part of what we want to do at La Rinconada. Golf courses are easy targets for complaints and there are a lot of our friends who may not understand all that we do for our environment and community. And, as neighbors in this wonderful community, it's good to know what's going on.

Summary of activity:

Because of the need for water conservation we have undertaken several projects at a cost of around \$3.5M that will reduce our water usage while allowing us to maintain the property in the manner expected of this fine private club. The most visual aspect of this work is that being done at the range on Wedgewood, but the majority is being done within the interior with the construction of a retention pond.

In order to become self sufficient in our water supply, we needed to create a retention pond for irrigation water. This generated about 9,000 cubic yards of spoils. We needed a depository for the spoils from that work; upgrading the range allowed us to efficiently use the spoils and help our conservation efforts. As you may recall, last year we did no watering at the range and the turf turned to dirt. While this is an excellent water saver, it does not represent our community. We have designed a very attractive landing area at the range utilizing the pond spoils and determined that the best surface for this area is Bermuda Grass. Bermuda is highly heat tolerant and drought resistant. It does require water, but in far less amounts than other grasses. Bermuda will also go "dormant" when water is withheld and won't die unless left without water for a lengthy period of time. Our plan is to sod the landing area and tee box with Bermuda grass, get it established and healthy, and then turn the water off, for the most part, to the landing area allowing it to go brown. We must continue to water the teeing surface in order to make it usable. You will see watering taking place during the grow-in period, but after establishment, it will lessen and then we'll only water enough to maintain the plants.

What follows are highlights of what we do at La Rinconada:

- Nationally golf courses account for 0.5% (1/2 of 1 percent) of all water withdrawn; in California the amount is less than 2%
- 2009 we upgraded our irrigation to newer more efficient and accurate technology at a cost of approximately \$180K
- Worked with Santa Clara Valley Water District's conservation program and received a \$29K rebate
- Inserted probes to gather real-time turf moisture levels in order to be more precise in irrigation levels

- 2013 converted 90 acres to Rye Grass which requires far less water than the original turf grass
- Retained golf course architect Bill Love to design golf course to take advantage of natural areas in an effort to reduce the irrigable turf
- Converted the range to Bermuda Grass, a highly drought tolerant grass which requires about 60% of the water needed for rye grass¹
- Landscaped 8 acres into waterless mulch from growing turf grass
- Use hand watering to focus on “hot spots”
- Changing our Standards to include longer roll, the result of drier fairways
- Our 2014 water reduction amounted to 25% of the target year
- Currently we are on pace for a 30% water reduction.

Mission Statement

La Rinconada will be recognized as a premier local private club by providing exceptional golf, dining and social experiences in a multi-generational, family-centric environment

Environmental Position

Because of our passion for the game of golf, we at La Rinconada know the great physical and psychological benefits of spending time in the outdoors, enjoying beautiful scenery and fresh air. As a result, we are determined to play our part in ensuring that California's natural environment remains intact for the enjoyment of present and future generations. LRCC is committed to reducing waste, conserving energy, and incorporating green technologies into the day-to-day operations of our Club. We will strive to maintain the high standards of our course with the utmost resource efficiency, and to manage our facilities in a responsible and sustainable manner.

Golf Course Conservation Mission

To only use as much water as needed to produce a healthy turf grass surface that is suitable for the game of golf as demanded by the Members of La Rinconada.

California is mandating that potable water use be curtailed in a variety of amounts: 6% to 36% dependent upon location, previous use, and other criteria. We have been asked to reduce our use by 25%; notice that we are not mandated under the California policy because our predominance of irrigation water is not potable. Be that as it may, we are committed to being good stewards of our environment and are both investing in conservation and continuing to plan for better conservation of all our natural resources.

The following report is intended to provide information about La Rinconada’s economic impact, the great progress that has already been made in reducing our water usage, and future plans for natural resource conservation.

La Rinconada’s Economic Role in the Community

¹ <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/turf/publications/water.html>

The sport of golf is a source of enjoyment and recreation for millions of Americans, instilling a sense of sportsmanship and an appreciation for the outdoors. It is also an important American industry, which creates jobs and supports economic development at local, regional, and national levels. The total impact of the golf industry on the American economy is estimated at \$176.8 billion. The industry sustains approximately 2 million jobs nationwide, with a total wage income of \$55.6 billion.² In the state of California, the golf economy contains 128,000 jobs, with a total wage income of \$4.1 billion, and has an estimated economic impact of \$13.1 billion.³ La Rinconada Country Club is a proud contributor to this enormous and economically vigorous industry.

In addition to promoting economic growth and employing millions of Americans, the golf industry is also a leader in charitable giving, donating \$3.9 billion a year to a diverse range of causes, including health, youth, education, the environment, and cultural groups. Approximately 143,000 golf events are held each year nationwide in support of charitable causes.⁴ In keeping with this philanthropic ethos, La Rinconada has hosted numerous events in order to raise money for local charities, including Child Advocates, Momentum for Mental Health, the Los Gatos Community Foundation, NCGA Youth on Course Program, and a large number of school auctions.

La Rinconada's ability to generate revenue for the local economy, host events that benefit local charities, and provide a living for its 97 employees is contingent upon the successful maintenance of its golf course. Irrigation is a crucial component of ensuring that the course remains playable.

Steps Already Taken to Reduce Water Usage

Water usage is an important issue faced by the golf industry, which recognizes that reducing water usage, particularly of potable irrigation sources, is both environmentally and economically responsible in the long term. Consequently, golf courses employ sophisticated computer systems and highly-trained superintendents to ensure that their irrigation methods are as efficient as possible. Nationwide, golf facilities account for 0.5% of all water withdrawn annually, and just 1.5% of all irrigated water applied.⁵ Superintendents employ a number of methods to conserve water, including the use of wetting agents, hand-watering, and keeping turf drier, collecting and utilizing data from multiple sources in making their decisions about whether to apply water.

A high percentage of golf course superintendents have four-year degrees, and the market naturally weeds out those who strain course budgets through irresponsible and wasteful overwatering. La Rinconada's golf superintendent, Kevin Breen, has degrees in meteorology and horticulture; he is also a class A certified golf course superintendent, and the past president of

² <http://www.wearegolf.org/economy/impact/>

³ <http://www.wearegolf.org/economy/state-by-state/>

⁴ <http://www.wearegolf.org/charity/contributions/>

⁵ Environmental Institute for Golf, *Golf Course Environmental Profile, Vol. II: Water Use and Conservation Practices on U.S. Golf Courses*

both local and state superintendents organizations, as well as current member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association National Board of Directors. Under his supervision, La Rinconada has taken the following steps to limit water usage:

- Purchased an \$180,000 Toro Lynks irrigation control system and a Campbell Scientific Weather Station, which calculate the amount of moisture lost in a day in order to determine the most efficient application of water. All surfaces are also checked and monitored to ensure that watering is necessary.
- Participated in the Santa Clara Valley Water District Irrigation and Landscape conservation programs
- Taken certain areas of the golf course out of irrigation (see image at the end of this document)
- Re-landscaped 8 acres from grass to mulch
- Converted 90 acres to perennial rye and chewing fescue grasses, which are deep-rooted and require less water

In response to the recent California drought, and in an effort to further maximize the efficiency of La Rinconada's water usage, Kevin Breen has also implemented a drought plan, the goal of which is "to only use as much as needed to produce a healthy turf grass surface that is suitable for the game of golf." This entails the ranking of areas of the golf course according to their importance for continued playability. Reductions in water usage have been made across all these areas as far as possible. When a non-recoverable loss of turf health is seen, water to the lowest-priority area is further reduced in order to preserve the integrity of higher-priority areas. In this way, La Rinconada aims to responsibly prioritize its maintenance tasks, making sacrifices in non-essential areas to ensure that the course in its entirety remains viable.

Please contact me at La Rinconada if you have any questions or comments on our progress.

Respectfully,

MacDonald Niven
General Manager