

## August 17th, 2021 Turf Breakout Questionnaire Responses

These are responses collected from a questionnaire distributed during the August 17, 2021, Turf Breakout Meeting.

(\*Note: Different colors are different responses)

### Do you have any questions and/or comments about the final golf course conservation program structure?

We believe the August proposal is the best path forward to ensure the long-term viability of golf courses throughout Arizona.

We understand the need for increasingly less water use on turfgrass, especially overseeding for winter use which is so critical to the Arizona golf industry's survival. While new breeding programs are identifying possible options for the future, the currently existing 5MP rules will force courses to adopt different methodologies to survive. We understand the need for legacy courses to adapt to fewer irrigated acres, but many courses which have already reduced acreage and water use will be unfairly compromised by the 5MP. We fear the economic impact of poor quality golf surfaces are likely to threaten the viability of several courses. It would appear to us that an economic component for water-use would be beneficial to all.

To confirm. Courses who do not draw ground water cannot be penalized for exceeding their water allotment? The current effluent credit remains in place for the 5th Management Plan?

I am glad to hear that the ADWR has listened to the golf industry's concerns as it relates to the 5MP. While the new allotment will still create agronomic challenges during dry years, the new plan offers totals that will more realistically help golf courses sustain the reduction in total gallons.

First and foremost, I want to thank you for working closely with the AZ Alliance for Golf. These decisions will impact us within the industry moving forward and merit strong consideration and scrutiny. I personally feel that we have come a long way during this process and I feel that the latest proposal is much improved over previous iterations. While I still maintain some concern, I feel like we're headed in the right direction.

Thank you,

Todd Storm  
Director of Agronomy  
Desert Forest Golf Club

The current proposal is the closest to fair/balanced to date, and I am encouraged to see the ADWR negotiating. I am a member of the Arizona Alliance for Golf and I appreciate the work the representatives have been doing on behalf of golf courses in the state and the continued efforts to work with the ADWR. It is important for the golf industry and the ADWR to work together to make sure that the future of the golf industry is recognized and that as partners sustainable agreements can be made. My final comment is that ADWR will follow the science and listen to the turf professionals in regards to how much water is needed to grow the crop and that many of us are the biggest water savers, because it is the right thing to do and it is the best thing for a business.

On behalf of McCormick Ranch Golf Club, I presented verbal comments at the August 17th turf breakout meeting. These written comments summarize some of the points made at that meeting.

McCormick Ranch Golf Club is concerned that the proposed fifth management plan turf conservation requirements threaten the viability of Arizona's historic golf courses by drastically curtailing their water supplies. The proposed turf conservation requirements will reduce some allotments by as much as 24%, which is not consistent with reasonable economic return and not feasible, as required by the Groundwater Code. ARS 45-567(A)(2); ARS 45-566(A)(2). ADWR's previous four management plans implemented gradual reductions in allotments that allowed golf courses to adapt by investing in more efficient irrigation systems or by removing some turf. Courses that were designed and constructed before 1985, when the first management plan was adopted, or before 1980, when the Groundwater Code was enacted, were created without notice or knowledge of turf conservation requirements. Removing turf on these courses and replacing it with desert landscaping can cost between \$30,000 to \$40,000 per acre. The proposed conservation requirements will require some golf clubs to remove in the vicinity of 50 acres per course, which is not consistent with

This information was gathered by the Arizona Department of Water Resources.

reasonable economic return and is not feasible.

Moreover, while the Outdoor Legacy Golf Course Revitalization Grant program is a step in the right direction, grants are limited to \$105,000 per course, which will provide assistance to remove only a few acres of turf per course. Many historic courses are faced with removal of large quantities of turf. For example, a golf club that must remove 100 acres of turf to be in compliance will have to spend in the range of \$4 million to do so.

Furthermore, while ADWR did engage in many public virtual meetings with the turf community, it did not utilize a Turf Advisory Committee as it did for its first three management plans. The advisory committee process ensures that all viewpoints are heard and that conservation requirements are developed with full transparency and accountability.

The golf industry accounts for only 1.9% of Arizona's total water use compared to its economic contribution of at least \$3.9 billion. In addition, many golf courses already utilize highly efficient irrigation systems and conservation technologies. Achievable conservation requirements should be developed that are consistent with reasonable economic return, without threatening the economic viability of Arizona's historic golf communities.

I made a verbal comment at the end of the meeting but want to reiterate some points here and add a few that I am not sure I clearly made in the moment.

I represent Troon Golf and Troon manages many golf courses throughout Arizona (about 30 facilities within the AMA's). Our portfolio includes some of the oldest courses, some of the newest, some high acreage turf facilities, some of the lowest acreage, some high-end private clubs, and some municipal, some that use 100% groundwater, some that use no groundwater, etc. We manage a wide range of courses and therefore recognize the difficulties with developing plans that apply to an industry with such a diverse spectrum.

Troon is a member of the Arizona Alliance for Golf and we appreciate ADWR working with the Alliance during the 5MP process. We have felt the AZ Alliance for Golf is an avenue for many different entities within the turf industry to consolidate perspectives/information, and streamline communication to the Department. From what it sounded like in the meeting, the AZ Alliance for Golf has been serving a function very similar to the Turf Advisory Committee (TAC) that was mentioned. In the future, I would like the Department to have follow-up discussions about this TAC with the industry to understand if/how to create it formally.

While there are still lingering issues we have with this proposal, we do feel this is an improvement from previous versions. This proposal is closer to what is realistic in terms of irrigation efficiency and resulting turf consumptive use rates (although we still think it is ahead of what is feasible for the majority of industry). Turf reductions are a significant undertaking and they should be acknowledged as such in any calculations regarding water conservation in the turf industry. It does not appear they have been specifically accounted for in previous management plans so given the structure of this 5MP I hope this is something that is prioritized. The grant opportunity will be helpful for our properties considering removing turf during the 5MP. It does not provide as much as we would have hoped for helping with costs, but it does offer some assistance. If there are any opportunities to adjust the structure of the grant before the 5MP begins, we would appreciate some additional consideration there.

I know many have been involved in discussions around the 4MP and 5MP the past couple years. I appreciate ADWR's willingness to work with representatives of the turf industry and bring in university perspectives. I hope we can continue to build partnerships in the future to problem solve and find solutions as the turf industry continues working towards water conservation.

We are working on comments still related to pre-1985 golf courses that are currently looking at about 17% reductions. Please allow a little more time for feedback.

**Do you have any other questions and/or comments not addressed above?**

I appreciate the ADWR working with Golf stakeholders and the Arizona Alliance for Golf to make improvements to prior versions of the 5MP. I understand these are challenging times and know the golf industry will continue to work with the ADWR in the future. Thank you all for everything done to reach this point.

Banked water allotment. What is the total amount which can be banked? Is the current water bank allotment being reset to zero?

I am discourage to look back and find that ADWR only reports regulating such a small number of other turf users, including HOA's(only 112 in the Phoenix AMA). In every meeting I have attended I hear "fair and equitable". To me this means that those doing everything in their power to conserve are far ahead of those that take no effort to conserve, and therefore end up being punished. With the recent monsoon storms that have hit the valley, it is easy to take a drive by city parks, HOA's, schools, and some golf courses and sadly see water running. Better education, technology, and even enforcement could provide ADWR the savings that they are mandated to produce without negatively impacting those entities already conserving.