



Poppy Hills Golf Course is a step closer to taking on a new look.

By Jerry Stewart

On Monday, Northern California Golf Association CEO Lyn Nelson confirmed that the NCGA Board of Directors recently approved a plan to remodel Poppy Hills and authorized NCGA officials to start working on the process of obtaining a permit.

Poppy Hills, which was established in 1986, is owned by the NCGA. "At this point, we will be working on the permit, which could take as much as two years to obtain," Nelson said.

According to Nelson, schematics for the plan include the installation of a new irrigation system, sand capping of the entire layout and the construction of new green complexes.

As part of what would be a complete course re-design, 13 holes would be "modestly" modified, while five holes would be "significantly" modified. There would also be a reduction on irrigated turf, meaning that if done, the new Poppy Hills would have more of a natural look, a la Pine Valley GC in New Jersey.

According to Nelson, the renovations would be performed under the auspices of Robert Trent Jones III, who originally designed Poppy Hills.

Along with naturalizing the look, the course could grow from what is currently around 6,800 yards to 7,000 yards. Par may also drop from 72 to 71.

"The new course would be a whole different experience," Nelson said.

Nelson added that a driving force behind the renovation is the conservation of water. The course has an excellent track record through its 100 percent utilization of reclaimed water for irrigation, but the overhaul further addresses water consumption by reducing irrigated areas of turf.

Should the permit be approved, the course would mostly likely close for nine months starting sometime in 2012 and then re-open in 2013.

During this year's U.S. Open at Pebble Beach Golf Links, United States Golf Association officials visited Poppy Hills to explore the possibility of the course hosting a future USGA event such as the U.S. Amateur Public Links Championship.

While located in Pebble Beach, Poppy Hills, which for decades was part of the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am course rotation, has green fees as low as \$55 for NCGA members, with twilight rates dropping to \$35. Open to the general public, the course also has become a hot spot for the NCGA Foundation's Youth on Course program, where kids can play for as low as \$2.

In 2006, the course was named "National Course of the Year" by the National Golf Course Owners Association.