

Event Sponsor:



Monday, October 12, 2026

3:30 p.m. Board of Directors Meeting

6:30 – 8:30 p.m. **50th Anniversary Social!**

R Club Lounge, Billings Hotel & Convention Center
Let's kick off the event! Gather to celebrate the wonderful community the members of Peaks & Prairies GCSA have built! We are 50 years old and going strong. Enjoy hors d'oeuvres! Drink tickets for conference participants.

Tuesday, October 13, 2026

Education presented in the Ballroom

7:00 a.m. **Registration desk is open.**

Continental breakfast is available, co-sponsored by **WILBUR-ELLIS, HARCO PIPE FITTINGS** and **MAGIC VALLEY TURFGRASS**

Any changes for the golf tournament accepted until 12:00 p.m. today

EXHIBITORS 8:00 a.m. **Convention Center**
Trade Show Exhibitor setup begins. *Please have equipment inside by 12:00 p.m. for overhead door to be shut.*

Please be set up by 1:30 p.m.

8:00 – 9:15 a.m. **50 Years of Golf Industry Evolution...and What's Coming Next**

Pat Jones, Flagstick LLC, Cleveland, Ohio
Jones looks at how the state of the profession and the business has changed over the past half-century. Pat will make some bold predictions about what the future holds and what it all means to you and your career.

9:15 – 9:30 a.m. **Break**

9:30 – 10:30 a.m. **How to Lead Generation Z to Succeed** Matt Gourlay, CGCS, MG, AGS, Hillcrest Country Club, Boise, Idaho
Practical, real-world strategies for effectively leading, mentoring, and developing Generation Z team members.

Learn how to understand their motivations, improve communication, reduce turnover, and build a stronger, more engaged crew ready for the future of golf course management.

10:35 – 11:35 a.m. **Turfgrass Potpourri**

Thomas Nikolai, Ph.D., Senior Specialist, Michigan State University Department of Plant, Soil, & Microbial Sciences, East Lansing, Michigan
Research updates focused on best management practices that include cultural and mechanical practices that minimize pesticide applications and conserve irrigation water.

11:35 – 12:30 p.m. **Lunch**

Sponsored by:



12:30 – 1:15 p.m. **Business Meeting, includes Elections** – President Pat Nowlen presiding.

Nominating chairman is Ryan Knapp, Election Slate, TBA

1:15 – 1:30 p.m. **50th Anniversary News!**

1:30 – 2:25 p.m. **Soft Skills Matter! Tips for Better Communications, Networking and Leadership**

Pat Jones, Flagstick LLC, Cleveland, Ohio
In several recent studies done by Pat Jones and Tyler Bloom, it's been clear that non-turf skills matter a lot to the success of superintendents and their operations. Jones provides actionable ideas you can use to take your team and career to the next level.

2:25 – 2:45 p.m. **Break**

co-sponsored by **2M COMPANY** and *(two available and welcomed)*

2:45 – 3:00 p.m. **Montana Golf Hall of Fame Recognition of Pete Grass, CGCS**

3:00 – 6:30 p.m. **Fall TRADE Show**
Convention Center Talk to our knowledgeable suppliers and distributors as they showcase their products and services!



AVAILABLE



Open to registrants (and families) — this event is not open to public. Food & beverage sponsorships available!

Wednesday, October 14, 2026

EXHIBITORS 7:00 – 10:00 a.m. Trade Show
Exhibitor move-out

7:20 a.m. Continental breakfast is available, co-sponsored by **HELENA AGRI-ENTERPRISES, GOLF SAFETY, and JUDGE NETTING MOUNTAIN WEST**

8:00 – 8:55 a.m. **The Mathematical Argument for the Discriminate Need of Fertilizer and Pesticides in the 21st century**

Thomas Nikolai, Ph.D., Senior Specialist, Michigan State University Department of Plant, Soil, & Microbial Sciences, East Lansing, Michigan
Topics include the history of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides and their impact on the planet over the past 2000 years. Presentation also covers resistance, regulations, GMOs, BMPs, and research on nutrient leaching and dermatological exposure.

9:00 – 9:50 a.m. **Minimal Inputs, Maximum Results** Matt Gourlay, CGCS, MG, AGS, Hillcrest Country Club, Boise, Idaho
Strategies for maintaining high-quality playing conditions while reducing water, fertilizer, chemicals, and overall inputs.

9:50 – 10:05 a.m. **Break**

10:05 – 11:35 a.m. **The Toughest Hazards are Not Always Part of the Course**

Kee Dunning, MS, MEd, LCPC, LMFT, and Dunning Counseling and Consulting, Inc.; Stacy Stellflug, Ph.D., APRN, FNP-BC, Montana State University College of Nursing; with Peter Grass, CGCS, Retired Superintendent, Billings, Mont.

A look at ways to better your communication skills and build positive relationships with the teams that surround you, along with family and friends. As part of those relationships, we also take a glimpse into how mental and physical health challenges affect them, what to look for, and how to help yourself and others through them.

11:35 – 12:20 p.m. **Lunch**

Sponsored by:



continued

1:00 p.m. **Fall Golf Outing, Pryor Creek Golf Club Link Course, Huntley, Mont.**

Host superintendent, Cole Clark. *The 50th Anniversary celebration continues with light hors d'oeuvres following golf.*

Thursday, October 15, 2026

~ Separate registration is required for this session

7:15 a.m. Registration desk is open with continental breakfast, co-sponsored by **REDOX BIO-NUTRIENTS** and (two available and welcomed)

8:00 – 9:00 a.m. **What does the Future Look like for Golf Course Maintenance**

Patrick Finlen, CGCS, Vice President of Denehy Club Thinking Partners, Kalispell, Mont.

During this talk, Finlen will explore many of the new technologies being utilized now—including autonomous mowers—and what's in store for the future.

9:00 – 9:15 p.m. **Break**

9:15 – 11:30 a.m. **Tips and Tricks for Equipment Managers and Maintenance Facilities**

Trent Manning, CTEM, Reel Turf Techs Creator, and Director of Equipment Solutions, STEC, Atlanta, Georgia

Join a session packed with practical insights gathered from golf courses across the country. Manning shares valuable tips and tricks that equipment managers can use to improve efficiency, solve common challenges, and enhance operations in their day-to-day roles. Learn innovative techniques and best practices directly from the field to elevate your work and keep your equipment running smoothly.

11:30 – 12:30 p.m. **Lunch**
Sponsored by: PACIFIC GOLF & TURF

Our Speakers:

Kee Dunning, M.S., MEd, LCPC, LMFT, is a therapist in Billings, Mont., who has owned and operated her own practice for 20+ years. Dunning grew up and graduated from high school in Lander, Wyo. After

graduation, she went on to Casper College where she earned an Associate of Liberal Arts, followed by a Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Social/Political Science, a Master of Education and Professional Counseling, plus a Master of Interdisciplinary Studies – all from Eastern Montana College/MSU Billings. Dunning worked as a teacher and coach before becoming a counselor. Her work has been featured in the Ken Burns documentary, “Hiding in Plain Sight: Youth Mental Illness.” Dunning has worked on and around golf courses throughout her adult life. She has an appreciation for what it takes to tend a golf course and create an environment for all to enjoy.

Patrick Finlen, CGCS, is the vice president of Denehy Club Thinking Partners and has been in the golf business for 40 years. He has managed private and public clubs in various leadership capacities, mastering the core disciplines of club management including agronomy, golf operations and club management. Finlen's professional background includes rising through the ranks at The Olympic Club in San Francisco, California, during his tenure from 2002 until 2019. Under his professional guidance, the club hosted the US Junior Amateur, US Amateur, US Open and US Four-Ball Championships. He also negotiated the contracts for the 2023 US Woman's Open, the 2028 PGA Championship, and the 2032 Ryder Cup for the club. Prior to The Olympic Club, Finlen was a golf course superintendent in Kansas City, Virginia Beach, and Monterey. Most recently, he was the general manager at Winchester Country Club outside of Sacramento. Finlen served on the GCSAA board of directors from 2006-2014 and was president in 2013. Throughout his career, he has spoken on club management throughout the United States, Asia, and Europe. A native of Washington DC, Finlen is a graduate of Rockhurst College in Kansas City with a degree in business administration.

Matt Gourlay, CGCS, MG, AGS, is a passionate, third-generation golf course superintendent at Hillcrest Country Club in Boise, Idaho. With family roots stretching back to the game's origins in Scotland, Matt brings unmatched dedication, expertise, and energy to the profession. Holding elite certifications from leading organizations across the globe, Certified Golf Course Superintendent (GCSAA), Master Greenkeeper (BIGGA), and Accredited Golf Course Superintendent (CGSA), he is a recognized leader in sustainable turf management. His outstanding

Peaks & Prairies GCSA

Fall Meeting & Trade Show

October 13-15, 2026

(Pre-event social October 12)



Billings Hotel & Convention Center
Billings, Montana

Enjoy Golf Outing: Pryor Creek Golf Club

BEST registration rates available until September 26
REDUCED hotel rates available until September 26

Event
Sponsor:

Nutrien
Solutions

*Peaks & Prairies GCSA is
dedicated to furthering the education
of our members for the betterment
of golf and its environment.*

Gourlay continued

environmental stewardship earned him the prestigious 2025 GCSAA President's Award for Environmental Stewardship. A dynamic advocate for best practices and continuous innovation, Matt is excited to share his insights with the Peaks & Prairies GCSA. Follow him on X @mattgourlaycgcs.

Pete Grass, CGCS, recently retired from working 50 years (34 as superintendent) at Hilands Golf Club in Billings, Mont., Grass is enjoying sleeping in and not stressing over weather anymore. He was a long-time board member and past president of Peaks & Prairies GCSA back in the 1990s. In 2009, he was elected to serve on the GCSAA Board of Directors and was elected president in 2016. In 2023, he received the GCSAA Leo Feser Award for his article appearing in GCM, "I Need Help and I Don't Mean Labor." Since in the years following, he has been a co-presenter with Kee Dunning and Stacy Stellflug at the GCSAA CTS. Their seminars, "Healthy Teams—Healthy Greens" and "Mind Matters—Insights About Mental Health from a Doctor, Therapist, and Superintendent" have had a great impact in many lives in the golf industry. Grass is also a 2026 inductee to the Montana State Golf Association "Hall of Fame."

Pat Jones has been a passionate advocate for superintendents and the golf industry for nearly 40 years. Jones started his career on the GCSAA staff in 1987 as a writer and then ran the association's communications and lobbying programs. After that, he was a magazine publisher for decades, steering the sales and editorial operations of Golf Course Industry, Lawn & Landscape, Golfdom, and GCM over the years. Now he runs his own firm, Flagstick LLC, and supports marketing and strategy for companies like BASF, Aquatrols, Rain Bird, BestSand, and Bunker Solutions. He also partners with Tyler Bloom on annual studies about industry employment trends. Jones lives and works in Cleveland.

Trent Manning, CTEM, is the Director of Equipment Solutions for STEC Equipment and a recognized leader in the turf equipment industry. With more than 28 years of experience in golf course maintenance, he has dedicated his career to advancing equipment management, technician education, and cutting unit performance. A recipient of the 2018 GCSAA Most Valuable Technician Award and the 2022

Edwin Budding Award, Manning earned his CTEM designation in the inaugural year of the certification and holds certificates in small engines, electrical systems, and reel theory. Manning is the creator and host of the Reel Turf Techs podcast and YouTube channel, where he shares educational content, industry insights, and the stories of turf equipment managers from around the world. He is a frequent speaker at regional, national, and international conferences, delivering practical, real-world education for equipment managers, technicians, and turf professionals. Outside of work, Manning enjoys traveling, visiting turf shops, finding great BBQ, and spending time with his two daughters.

Thomas A. Nikolai, Ph.D., has been performing turfgrass research and teaching at Michigan State University since 1992. Areas of research interest include cultural and mechanical practices and their relevance to decreasing inputs. University courses Nikolai has taught include Turfgrass and the Environment, Pesticide and Fertilizer Technology, World of Soils, Turfgrass Irrigation, Turfgrass Management and Turf and Landscape Analytical Practices. Nikolai has given presentations in 31 countries, 8 Canadian provinces, and in 40 states.

Stacy Stellflug, Ph.D., APRN, FNP-BC, is a nurse practitioner and professor of nursing at Montana State University Mark and Robyn Jones College of Nursing. She grew up and graduated from high school in Glasgow, Mont. She attended Carroll College where she earned a Bachelor of Psychology and earned both a Bachelor and Master of Nursing from Montana State University Bozeman. Stellflug earned a Ph.D. in nursing from the University of Colorado - Anschutz Medical Campus. She currently practices one day a week in private practice and is a researcher at MSU where she studies rural healthcare workforce and how to improve health care in rural settings. She enjoys travel, reading, photography,