

# Golf courses and water have a sustainable relationship in Fountain Hills

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By Jeff Lessig | Fountain Hills

OPINION — With a deep nod to Rusty Childress’ recent spot-on warnings about unsustainable Western regional water consumption, let’s focus attention on a critical local industry: Golf. By any metric, four 18-hole courses in a town of 25,000 or so residents is not par for the course. But for this town, it’s a great score.

Three courses are centerpieces of mature, master planned communities, SunRidge Canyon, Eagle Mountain and Firerock. Housing in these developments and our town as a whole produces significant waste. Those drains must lead ... somewhere. And that somewhere is our Fountain Hills Sanitary District that treats “every drop” into top-rated A+ recycled wastewater.

That valuable reclaimed water is then paid for and redistributed to irrigate those golf courses as well as town parks and of course our iconic Fountain Lake. Our non-potable water demand and supply are largely in balance. In a word, sustainable.

Golf’s hot. According to the National Golf Foundation, more rounds of golf were played in the U.S. last year than any previous year in history, with 16.6 million of those rounds played right here in Arizona per a study by the Arizona Alliance for Golf (AAG), a coalition of golf’s allied associations. This regional golf destination attracts players from around the country and indeed, from around the world.

Per AAG, golf uses just 2% of Arizona’s water yet produces \$6 billion in economic activity, supports 66,200 jobs, \$2.3 billion in wages, \$518 million in tax revenues, \$2.4 billion in premium-value golf-adjacent property and an estimated \$100 million in annual charitable contributions. Golf travelers spend on average 2.9 times more than general tourists.

Fountain Hills is a useful example of water sustainability for others in the Southwest. And clearly, golf is good for everyone.