Rocky Mountain Chapter

GCSAA

Golf Course Superintendents Association of America

2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

November 16 & 17
2026
Denver Marriott
West
Golden, CO

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WELCOME

Dear Valued Members,

We cordially invite you to join us for the 10th Annual RMGCSA Conference. We have created this compelling event to bring more value to your RMGCSA membership. This event is a convenient, cost effective, and fun opportunity to earn your educational credits in an atmosphere that is tailored specifically for our membership.

This two-day event includes education as well as table top displays brought to you by our affiliate partners. Day one will start with breakfast, registration, and message from the incoming RMGCSA Board of Directors. This will be followed by a lineup of engaging speakers. These speakers will present a wide range of golf course and career related topics. Following the days' education there will be a welcome reception linking BBQ, games, and Monday Night Football. This reception will provide an opportunity for sponsors to meet with superintendents to discuss products and continue fostering relationships with the membership.

Day two will offer a breakfast that will provide additional opportunities for members to network and catch up with seldom seen friends. RMGCSA is excited to offer this event to our membership as an opportunity to learn and network. We think this is an outstanding conference where every member will find something which will benefit them personally and professionally. Prior to the event on Monday there will be a "pre-game" social event on Sunday night at 6:30. This is an "on your own" event but a great opportunity to talk shop with your peers. RMGCSA looks forward to seeing you again at the 2026 event, it has become one of our most popular and successful events.

Sincerely,

Joe Kunze, CGCS, RMGCSA President, City of Arvada

Hotel Information



Denver Marriott West $149.00

1717 Denver West Blvd. Golden, CO 80401

MUST BE MADE NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 23, 2026. CAN BE MADE BY CALLING: 1-800-238-1803 OR 303-279-9100.

Conference Registration Includes:

- All Classes
- All Meals
- Breaks
- Conference Gift
- Reception

Three ways to register: mail in form, scan and email form or register online at www.rmgcsa.org

Fun & Food Nearby:

RED ROCKS PARK AND AMPHITHEATRE · COLORADO MILLS · DENVER ART MUSEUM · REGAL CINEMAS · RED ROBIN GOURMET BURGERS · THE KEG STEAKHOUSE + BAR · Olive Garden ITALIAN KITCHEN · OUTBACK STEAKHOUSE

...Plus much more!!

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Sunday November 15th, 2026

6:30 - 9:00 PM	Social Activity

Monday, November 16th, 2026

7:00 - 7:30 AM	Registration - TableTopSet-up - Breakfast
7:30 - 8:00 AM	Welcome
7:30 - 8:00 AM	Breakfast: Sponsors Nutrien Solutions HERITAGE LANDSCAPE SUPPLY
7:30 - 8:00 AM	Presidents Welcome Message Joe Kunze, CGCS, RMGCSA President, City of Arvada
8:00 - 9:00 AM	Improving Knowledge and Management of Winter Stresses on Golf Courses Eric Watkins PhD, Department of Horticultural Science, University of Minnesota *Winter injury remains one of the most unpredictable and financially devastating challenges for golf course superintendents in cold climates. Because winter conditions vary wildly from year to year, research-based solutions have historically been difficult to pin down. The WinterTurf project is changing this by investigating the mechanisms of winter kill to develop winter-stress tolerant turfgrasses, better mitigation strategies, and models to predict winter damage before it happens. This talk will provide the latest updates from the project, including new findings on ice encasement, snow mold management, and the impacts of late-fall topdressing. Attendees will also learn how they can participate in this international effort to reduce turfgrass winter damage risk.*
9:15 - 10:15 AM	Optimize Your Operation Austin Wright CTEM, Hazeltine National Golf Club - Chaska, MN *Are you ready to better yourself and your facility? Do you want your operation to run smoothly and efficiently? Yes, your physical setup impacts that but don't feel stuck. Every facility has opportunities to optimize by rethinking your current space and utilizing your resources already around you. This seminar provides ideas you can implement right away that are budget conscious and proven effective. During this hour, you can see methods of simplification, communication, and organization to enhance your workspace.*
10:30 - 11:30 AM	Professionalism in the Golf Course Superintendent Profession Erin B. Wolfram, CPRW, First Green *Professionalism in the golf course superintendent profession is built on leadership, integrity, and respect, extending far beyond turf management. GCSAA's Erin Wolfram, Director of First Green & Workforce Development, will discuss fostering strong mentor–mentee relationships that encourage learning, accountability, and career development, as well as techniques for maintaining ethical, transparent, and effective business relationships with owners, boards, vendors, and members. Professional conduct in the workforce sets the standard for safety, fairness, communication, and team culture, directly impacting morale and performance. Erin will also highlight the superintendent's role in growing the game of golf by serving as an industry ambassador and supporting educational outreach, sustainability efforts, and career pathways that introduce a younger workforce to the profession.*
11:45 - 12:45 PM	Lunch: Sponsors UNITED Ag & Turf | GOLFKress Frost Inc Spray Technology Products HERITAGE LANDSCAPE SUPPLY Harrell's Growing a Better World RMGCSA Business Meeting
12:45 - 1:15 PM	Legislative Update Jennifer Cassell, Bowditch & Cassell Public Affairs Lobbyist Jennifer Cassell will provide a Colorado legislative update as well as recap advocacy efforts put forth by RMGCSA members and the Colorado Golf Coalition. Gina Rizzi will discuss the importance of the BMP Hero and getting 100% participation from every golf course in Colorado

1:15 - 2:10 PM	How PGA Tour Data Collection & Interpretation Applies to All Golf Courses Alex Stuedemann, TPC Agronomy The collection and interpretation of data is a pivotal tool utilized during the preparation and execution of PGA TOUR events, but its value extends far beyond the professional tournaments. We will explore the many different metrics available and where their application can provide benefit to daily operations at clubs of all levels.
2:15 - 3:10 PM	Reducing Inputs on Golf Courses Through Grass Selection Eric Watkins PhD, Department of Horticultural Science, University of Minnesota The past several decades have seen tremendous progress in the development of new turfgrass cultivars. Advances in disease resistance, wear and traffic tolerance, water use efficiency, and heat tolerance, among other things, have resulted in great options for turfgrass managers who need to seed new areas or improve existing stands. Many of these cultivars can provide functional turfgrass surfaces under reduced input management. Attendees will learn about the best low-input turfgrass species and cultivar options for the Rocky Mountain region, along with approaches for designing resilient seed mixtures that perform well under harsh course conditions.
3:15 - 4:15 PM	USGA Update - Northwest Year in Review Ross Niewola, Consulting Agronomist for the USGA A review of trends and successes around the Northwest. New methods, great ideas, and applicable science from your own neck of the woods.
4:15 - 5:00 PM	Wildlife on the Course - How Can Raptors Help You? Devin Jaffe, Founder of Nature's Educators *Join Nature's Educators to meet some live raptors and learn about how wild raptors can actually help keep golf course ecosystems healthy! Learn some basic raptor identification skills as well as learn the regulations surrounding these birds. Be sure to bring your camera!*
5:00 - 8:30PM	Reception: Sponsors POTESTIO BROTHERS EQUIPMENT, INC. · DCPS DENVER COMMERCIAL PROPERTY SERVICES · A1 organics · Simplot TURF & HORTICULTURE · HELENA
5:00 - 5:30PM	Reception Meet with Vendors
5:30 - 8:30 PM	Dinner, drinks, and cornhole Networking, food, drinks, cornhole tournament, & football on screens!

Tuesday, November 17th, 2026

We look forward to seeing you at the 2026 Annual RMGCSA Conference!

7:30 - 8:00 AM	Breakfast: Sponsors HERITAGE LANDSCAPE SUPPLY · Nutrien Solutions
8:00 - 9:00 AM	Foundation for Excellence Austin Wright CTEM, Hazeltine National Golf Club - Chaska, MN *Your team and operation will evolve throughout the seasons, are you ready? This seminar will shine a light on the importance of strong leadership within your shop and grounds complex. Let's discover strategies to develop your team and strengthen your foundation for golf course success. Your team will take time to grow, just as turfgrass doesn't heal overnight; it requires ambition, patience, and dedication. You will walk away with an implementation plan to elevate your operation from year to year.*
9:15 - 10:45 AM	Renovations at Boulder Country Club and Rolling Hills Aaron Fankhauser CGCS, Director of Agronomy, Club at Rolling Hills & Tim Palko, Boulder Country Club *Aaron Fankhauser, CGCS and Tim Palko will share photos and lessons learned during recent renovation projects at their respective facilities.*
11:00 - 12:00 PM	Panel OR Open Mic Discussion with Attendees Staffing, AG Practices, Challenges, Pro/Super Relationship, Assistant Pipeline

SPEAKER BIOS



Jennifer Cassell, Bowditch & Cassell Public Affairs

Jennifer is a partner with the government relations firm Bowditch & Cassell Public Affairs (BCPA) where she advocates on behalf of economic development, insurance, education, local government, and agriculture interests to the Colorado General Assembly. Jennifer co-founded BCPA after working as a lobbyist for Tomlinson & Associates advocating on behalf of many similar interests and as the Legislative Liaison and Policy Advisor for the Governor's Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT). Jennifer has also worked as a legislative aide, campaign manager, and research associate in Washington D.C., Colorado, and Kansas. Jennifer was a junior golfer in Kansas and a member of the University of Kansas Women's Golf Team from 2000-2002.



Aaron Fankhauser CGCS, Director of Agronomy, Club at Rolling Hills

Aaron Fankhauser, CGCS, is the Director of Agronomy at the Club at Rolling Hills in Golden, CO. He previously served as Assistant Superintendent at The Club at Rolling Hills and has been at the course since 2005. He is a 12-year GCSAA member and is the Past President of the Rocky Mountain GCSA. He has served on GCSAA's Certification Committee and Scholar's Competition Task Group and was elected to the GCSAA Board of Directors at the association's 2026 Annual Meeting in Orlando. Fankhauser earned a bachelor's degree from Metropolitan State University in Denver, CO and lives in Golden, CO.



Devin Jaffe, Founder of Nature's Educators

Devin Jaffe is a licensed Master Falconer as well as the Founder of Nature's Educators. She has given thousands of presentations to hundreds of thousands of individuals from all over the world. Along with hunting with birds of prey and teaching about them, she is also a licensed raptor propagator and breeds raptors for other falconers and educators. Devin has a BA in Wildlife Management and has been working with and training birds of prey for 21 years now. Nature's Educators is the largest wildlife outreach program in Colorado giving an average of 1200-1400 presentations annually all over the nation.



Ross Niewola, Consulting Agronomist for the USGA

Ross has more than 15 years of working in golf course agronomy. A Penn State graduate with a degree in turfgrass management, he has built his resume working with a variety of golf courses, climates, and turf types. Ross has worked on golf courses in the North, South, East, and West regions of the United States; and has hosted and worked on more than 20 championships with the PGA, LPGA, PGA of America, and USGA. As a Consulting Agronomist for the USGA, he currently lives in Oregon and covers the Northwest.



Tim Palko, Boulder Country Club Interim Superintendent

Tim Palko has served as Director of Grounds at Boulder Country Club since June 2011. Originally from Pittsburgh, Tim was introduced to the game of golf at a young age by his father and quickly developed a passion for both the game and working outdoors.

His career in Turfgrass Management began at the Pittsburgh Field Club, where a summer job in the grounds department sparked his interest in golf course management as a profession. After gaining hands-on experience working full time at the club, Tim enrolled in the two-year Turfgrass Management program at Penn State University.

Drawn to opportunities in the West, Tim completed an internship at Castle Pines Golf Club in 2003, where he contributed to preparations for the Sprint International PGA Tour event. Following graduation, he joined Country Club at Castle Pines as an irrigation technician and steadily advanced through the ranks to First Assistant Superintendent. During that time, he played key roles in multiple renovation projects, including bunker, irrigation, and driving range improvements, while building extensive experience in golf course maintenance, leadership, and construction management.

In the summer of 2011, Tim was hired by Boulder Country Club as Interim Superintendent and has continued to lead the club's grounds operations ever since, bringing a passion for the game, dedication to the profession, and commitment to continuous learning to his work every day.

SPEAKER BIOS



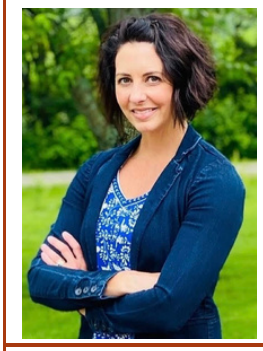
Alex Stuedemann, TPC Agronomy

Alex Stuedemann is the Senior Director, TPC Agronomy and 27-year employee for the PGA TOUR building his experiences across a variety of roles at TPC Twin Cities, TPC Deere Run, TPC San Antonio, as well as within PGA TOUR Construction & Design Services and PGA TOUR Agronomy. A 2000 graduate of the University of Minnesota, Alex holds a B.S. in Environmental Horticulture with an emphasis in Landscape Design and Turfgrass Science. He works collaboratively across the PGA TOUR to deliver top-level course conditioning for professional golf tournaments both domestically and abroad, including the oversight of the TPC network. Outside of work, Alex enjoys life with his wife of 20 years, Erin, and their two daughters, Sophia (12) and Kaeva (9), and yellow lab Zuri.



Eric Watkins PhD, Department of Horticultural Science, University of Minnesota

Eric Watkins is a professor in the Department of Horticultural Science and vice provost for distributed learning at the University of Minnesota. Eric received his Ph.D. in plant biology from Rutgers University. Current research activities involve germplasm improvement of several turfgrass species and projects investigating approaches to reduce winter damage on cool-season turfgrasses. He is also involved with cultivar evaluation and other turfgrass science research focused on low-input systems. In his administrative role, Eric provides leadership for online educational programs across the University



Erin B. Wolfram, CPRW, First Green

Erin B. Wolfram, CPRW has over twenty years of experience in career and professional etiquette consulting and online career course development. After sixteen years in higher education, she now serves as the director of First Green and workforce development at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA). She previously owned Career Advantage Golf from 2020 – 2025, providing career and job search consulting services to GCSAA members. Erin received a Bachelor of Science in Secondary English Education from Kansas State University, as well as both a Master of Science in Counseling Psychology and a Master of Science in Educational Technology from The University of Kansas. She is a Certified Professional Resume Writer (CPRW) and earned a professional etiquette certificate in 2012 from The Etiquette Institute in St. Louis, MO.



Austin Wright CTEM, Hazeltine National Golf Club - Chaska, MN

Austin Wright, CTEM, proudly serves as the Equipment Manager of Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minn., which hosted the recent 2026 KPMG Women's PGA Championship and 2024 US Amateur Championship. He realized his passion for golf while playing for his high school in Lawrence, Kan. He began his studies at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kan., and attended Washburn Institute of Technology in Topeka, Kan. Wright's experience throughout the golf industry, ranging from crew member, assistant superintendent, service technician, leading to a Certified Turf Equipment Manager has provided the unique ability to relate to all the team members to see the operation through their eyes. He held various positions around the Kansas City area before becoming the Grounds Complex & Equipment Manager of Sand Valley Golf Resort in Nekoosa, Wisc. where he was part of the team that built five golf courses and three grounds complexes. Wright earned Certified Turf Equipment Manager from GCSAA's program becoming the seventh person to achieve the CTEM designation.

Rocky Mountain Golf Course Superintendents Association

2026 Annual Conference

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Rocky Mountain Chapter GCSAA

2026 Annual Conference Attendee Registration

Register online at www.rmgcsa.org

Name

Company

Street Address

City State Zip

Phone Cell E-Mail

Conference Registration

	Early Bird- On or before October 23rd	After October 23rd
☐ Member Registration	$275.00	$375.00
☐ Non-Member Registration	$375.00	$475.00

Registration Includes: All classes, all meals, breaks, conference gift, and reception

Donation for turfgrass research to The Rocky Mountain Environmental Golf Institute (RMEGI)

☐ $25.00 ☐ $50.00 ☐ $100.00

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ENVIRONMENTAL GOLF INSTITUTE

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Method of payment:

☐ Check ☐ American Express ☐ Discover ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa

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360 Oak Ave Suite 140, Eaton, CO 80615

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