

U.S. Open Championship coming to Chambers Bay

\$100 million in economic impact expected
from 2015 golf tournament in Pierce County



USGA

U.S. OPEN

What: The U.S. Open Championship is one of 13 national golf championships conducted annually by the United States Golf Association. Along with The Masters, the British Open and the PGA Championship, it is considered one of the major tournaments in men's professional golf's Grand Slam.

Where and when: The site of the Open changes every year. It is played in mid-June. The final round is typically scheduled for Father's Day Sunday. The 2008 U.S. Open is scheduled June 12-15 at Torrey Pines Golf Course in San Diego.

Who: The 156-player field for the U.S. Open is made up of players who have earned a spot through one of 17 full-exemption categories and players who qualify in a series of qualifying events. Professional and amateur golfers (men and women) with a handicap index of 1.4 or lower are eligible to compete for a spot.

U.S. AMATEUR

What: The U.S. Amateur Championship is one of 10 amateur tournaments conducted annually by the United States Golf Association. Before professional golf gained prominence, the U.S. Amateur was considered a "major" tournament as part of golf's Grand Slam.

Where and when: The site of the Amateur changes every year. It is generally played in August. The 2008 U.S. Amateur is scheduled for Aug. 18-24 at the Pinehurst Resort in Pinehurst, N.C.

Who: The U.S. Amateur is open to amateur golfers who have a handicap index not exceeding 2.4.



DREW PERINE/The News Tribune file

Chambers Bay will become just the third municipal golf course to host the U.S. Open, in 2015. "It's like hosting the Super Bowl for four days in a row," Pierce County Executive John Ladenburg said Thursday.

The Pierce County-owned Chambers Bay Golf Course lands the 2015 U.S. Open and the 2010 U.S. Amateur Championship. The economic benefit will be huge.

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The United States Golf Association will announce today that the nation's premier championship – the U.S. Open – will come to Pierce County's Chambers Bay Golf Course in 2015.

The association also will announce that Chambers Bay will host the U.S. Amateur Championship in 2010.

The tournaments are a tremendous coup for the county-owned golf course in University Place that opened last June. The U.S. Open alone is expected to draw 65,000 people a day and fill 10,000 hotel rooms throughout the region for nearly a week.

Based on the experience of previous U.S. Open tournaments, Pierce County Executive John Ladenburg expects a total economic impact from the tournament to be at least \$100 million.

By comparison, the 2001 Major League Baseball All-Star Game in Seattle was projected to have a \$60 million impact.

"It's like hosting the Super Bowl for four days in a row," Ladenburg said Thursday.

The USGA's executive committee approved the tournaments Thursday at its annual meeting in Houston.

"We are excited to take the U.S. Open Championship and the U.S. Amateur to such an awesome site," Jim Hyler, chairman of the USGA Championship Committee, said in announcing the decision. "This is the first

time the U.S. Open has been to Washington, and we are confident that the golf course will provide a challenging test for the best players in the world, as well as a great spectator experience for those who attend the event and watch it online and on television."

The USGA is a private organization that operates 13 annual national championships. The U.S. Open and U.S. Amateur tournaments draw top professional and amateur talent – think Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson.

Big names draw big money. With tens of thousands of people spending money on rooms, meals and rental cars, the tournaments should be a windfall for local busi-

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Take a hole-by-hole virtual tour of the Chambers Bay Golf Course on our site.
www.thenewstribune.com/sports/golf

IN SPORTS: The time between now and the U.S. Open here will fly by.
John McGrath, CI

CHAMBERS BAY

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nesses and governments.

This year's U.S. Open in San Diego is expected to have an economic impact of \$80 million to \$100 million. The state of Pennsylvania estimated the impact of last year's tournament in Pittsburgh at \$59.7 million.

Ladenburg said the payoff here could be higher because Chambers Bay was designed to accommodate more visitors. The San Diego tournament is expected to draw 45,000 to 50,000 people a day – at least 15,000 fewer each day than Chambers Bay can hold.

Ladenburg expects today's announcement to spark the public's interest in playing the county-owned course as soon as next week. And he said the long-term benefits of international attention could be substantial.

"We're going to see some absolutely gorgeous pictures of Pierce County traveling across the world for a week," he said.

Gov. Chris Gregoire welcomed the announcement in a statement released to The News Tribune.

"Chambers Bay Golf Course is a jewel for the entire state of Washington and the Pacific Northwest," Gregoire said. "The U.S. Open and the U.S. Amateur championships will be a wonderful opportu-

CHAMBERS BAY AT A GLANCE

Cost: \$20.7 million

Location: 250 acres at 6320 Grandview Drive W., University Place

Designer: Robert Trent Jones II

Builder: Heritage Links

Opened: June 2007

Green fees: Rates vary by day and season. Pierce County residents pay \$55 through February. For a summer weekend, county residents will pay \$114. Non-Pierce residents pay \$75 through February and will pay \$171 on the weekend this summer.

More information: For tee times, call 253-460-GOLF or visit www.chambersbaygolf.com.

nity to showcase the natural beauty of our state and share it with golf enthusiasts around the globe."

Gregoire singled out Ladenburg for "his hard work on delivering the championship events to Pierce County."

LADENBURG'S VISION PAYS OFF

Final details of a contract between the county and the USGA must be negotiated by June 1.

Pierce County will host and pay for the amateur tournament in 2010. But the

county will get the ticket sales and other income, and Ladenburg said the county will "break even or a little better" on the amateur tournament.

The big prize comes in 2015.

The USGA will pay Pierce County to use Chambers Bay. Ladenburg expects the fee to be in the \$2 million to \$2.5 million range. The two agencies will split some costs and share revenue.

Several area agencies – including Sound Transit, Pierce Transit and King County Metro Transit – already are devising a plan to move tens of thousands of people in and out of Chambers Bay during the tournaments.

The county also must build a permanent clubhouse at Chambers Bay to accommodate the U.S. Open. A modular building serves as the clubhouse for now.

The county hopes a private developer will invest about \$35 million to build the clubhouse, lodging, a practice facility and driving range and split the profits with the county. The county will seek proposals from developers later this month.

Between USGA payments and tax revenue, Ladenburg said the county will more than recover its costs for the tournaments.

"The bottom line is the taxpayers are going to benefit from this," he said. "That's why everybody fights over hosting a U.S. Open."

Landing the tournament could vindicate Ladenburg's vision for Chambers Bay. Public funding of a championship-caliber course that charges up to \$171 a round has been a source of ongoing controversy.

When he proposed the course several years ago, Ladenburg pitched it as a national showcase that would draw top tournaments to the Pacific Northwest.

Acclaimed course designer Robert Trent Jones II designed Chambers Bay to test the skills of the country's top golfers. The county has been working with the USGA for years to ensure it would meet the association's needs.

Ladenburg said that close relationship paid off.

"It's one of those overnight successes that took years," he said.

'JUST HAD EVERYTHING GOING FOR IT'

Chambers Bay will be just the third municipal course to host the U.S. Open.

Bethpage Black in New York hosted the championship in 2002 and will host the 2009 event. Torrey Pines in San Diego will host this year's event.

Mike Davis, USGA's senior director of rules and competitions, said Chambers Bay didn't immediately get his attention.

"We often talk to people telling us they have this course ready for a U.S. Open," Davis said Thursday. "And when I had someone say there was a site south of Se-

attle, and in Tacoma, I didn't pay much attention.

"But when I found out it was ... on the water, publicly owned and had 1,000 square acres, I thought, 'Huh, this doesn't happen very often.'"

Davis said Chambers Bay "just had everything going for it. It didn't miss a beat. It was what we wanted, in terms of a championship course. We're very excited about this."

Built on a former gravel mine, the 18-hole course offers spectacular views of Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains.

The Scottish links-style course features sandy terrain and just one tree.

Since its opening last summer, the course has gained national acclaim. Golf Magazine named it "Best New Course of the Year." It was second on Golfweek's list of best new courses. And Travel & Leisure golf magazine named Chambers Bay 2007 Course of the Year.

Just last week Houston-based Heritage Links earned a Golf Course Industry magazine "2008 Builder Excellence Award" for its work in building Chambers Bay.

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Staff writer Todd Milles contributed to this report.