

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Hold on: El Toro course won't be open this summer

By CURTIS ZUPKE
The Orange County Register

Golfers who hoped the former El Toro Marine Base Golf Course would be open this summer will have to find tee times elsewhere.

A Lennar Corp. spokeswoman confirmed that the re-opening of the Irvine course has been pushed back because of a shift in development priorities.

Lennar originally planned to re-open the course this summer as part of the Great Park project. However, the first phase now will occur with the project's "Life Long Learning District," which is intended for educational, retail and office uses, said Carol Wold, vice president of community affairs for Lennar.

Wold said Lennar is working with the city on a timetable for re-opening the course, a re-configuration of the original 18-hole layout.

"Part of what will dictate that timing is work we are jointly undertaking to re-design the golf course to accommodate the wildlife corridor that runs through it," Wold wrote in an e-mail.

"We are working to reconfigure some of the holes/or modify the design of the wildlife corridor to create the best design possible."

Original plans called for a par-72 course that stretched more than 7,000 yards from the back tees. Tee boxes and dogleg markers were in place before development was delayed.

When the course eventually re-opens, a temporary clubhouse will be erected while a new one is built

El Toro Golf Course closed in December 2006, approximately 18 months after Lennar and Irvine officials signed a deal to construct one the nation's largest public parks.

The project has been set back largely because of the housing crisis that has reportedly forced Lennar to re-think its development amid funding issues.

It is not known if Lennar will pursue original plans for a 45-hole facility. Wold said discussions are "ongoing."