

[Golf Course Wow's Jack Nicklaus](#)

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Jack Nicklaus was in Ucluelet Friday to promote the Wyndansea Oceanfront Golf Resort. (Keven Drews Photo)

By Keven Drews

Golf-legend Jack Nicklaus described the soon-to-be built \$650-million Wyndansea Oceanfront Golf Resort in Ucluelet with one word Friday afternoon. "Wow: if that doesn't describe the property, I don't know what does," said Nicklaus. "Wow, double wow, triple wow, just a whole bunch of wows." Sitting under a white party tent and just metres above the Pacific's pounding surf, Nicklaus capped off a day-long marketing blitz designed to sell the proposed luxury development to prospective buyers, bankers and real-estate agents. Wealthy customers were flown in for the day from around North America and Asia, and with a handful of journalists, they gathered under a tent to hear Nicklaus talk. Not invited was a handful of local residents who have criticized developers for breaching buffer zones around a planned municipal trail and a closed municipal dump, and trespassing onto an adjacent property by as much as 75 metres. "You have only one chance to do it right," said Nicklaus during a press conference. "This will be an 18-hole golf course with 18 good holes." Nicklaus said he'll let the land define the golf course and doesn't expect to encounter any environmental problems. "Why do you think golfers like to play golf," he said. "They like to play in a pretty place. They like to play in a place that brings man closer to nature." Built by Ucluelet's Marine Drive Properties Ltd., the Wyndansea Oceanfront Golf Resort will cover about 148 hectares of prime oceanfront property on the Ucluelet

Peninsula.

The company plans to build an 18-hole course designed by Nicklaus – which will become home to the Jack Nicklaus Golf Club of Canada – an exclusive neighbourhood of 30 oceanfront and semi-oceanfront lots called the Signature Circle, a five star hotel and luxury condos.

So exclusive is Signature Circle that only those who are invited may purchase a home.

Meantime, architects will design the Signature Circle neighbourhood, hotel and golf clubhouse to meet Gold standards set by LEED – the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System. An internationally accepted benchmark, LEED sets standard for the design, construction and operation of green buildings.

Audubon International, an international non-profit environmental organization, will monitor the construction.

As part of a public amenity, Marine Drive Properties is required to extend the Wild Pacific Trail – an existing eight-kilometre oceanfront trail and a popular tourism draw – along the resort's waterfront.

Just after noon Friday, prospective customers and a handful of journalist flew into Tofino Airport at Long Beach and were bused south to Ucluelet for the marketing blitz.

Once on site, they toured the development, chipped golf balls on a temporary green, ate lunch and met with members of the development team before Nicklaus' press conference.

Howard Kruschke, director of sales for Wyndansea, said he flew in potential buyers from Minnesota, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Edmonton, Calgary, Korea and China. "I think they're worth a fair amount of money," he said of the clients. "They own other homes in other locations around the world."

He said the resort and golf course should open by the spring of 2009.

Ron Lea, a partner with Vancouver's Folio Hotel and Resort Architecture, said the environment will play a big role in the development.

"I don't think you can build hotels in this century without taking it into consideration. I think with this site it's been essential."

The 150-room hotel will incorporate sea-water exchange and renewable energy and will preserve local habitat, he said.

Built out of concrete, the hotel will fly the flag of a major chain, he said, and will incorporate wood for cladding material.

"It's a prime piece of land. What we need to do is integrate development which we feel fits into the site."

"It's a site that really deserves that approach," he said.

Not everybody, however, agrees developers have followed the right approach.

"The process is an issue," said "Oyster" Jim Martin, an Ucluelet resident and father of the Wild Pacific Trail. Martin wasn't invited to the event.

"My invitation must have got lost in the mail."

Martin said he believes the resort will be exceptional but he criticized the developers for destroying a buffer between the golf course and the planned trail extension.

"They came in without permits or approvals and commenced full-blown construction," he said. "They just took. They didn't negotiate for this."

"It's hard to trust them when they act like there's no one to answer to."

Ucluelet Mayor Dianne St. Jacques, said she, too, has had concerns with the process. She said the developers breached the buffer by about 15 metres, dragged their feet on flagging the buffer and took too long to get a qualified environmental professional – a third-party monitor – on site.

In fact, she said, the developer began clearing long before the OEP was on site.

"You can't take anything for granted because when there's so many people, you have to keep on top of it all the time."

Barb Schramm, president of the Wild Pacific Trail Society, said she wants to partner with the developer and expand the trail, but she's concerned about the trail.

"At the golf course we still need to define a 10-metre buffer zone around the future Wild Pacific Trail route, both where land clearing has encroached on the trail and where the land is still untouched. This will protect the buffer zone before more trees are removed for the future resort site.

"We have a master development agreement plan that guarantees the trail in this area.

"We just need to be sure everyone involved is working to make this trail as natural and undisturbed as possible."

Stomma Investments Inc., a company owned by local resident Stephan Opalski, complained in a press release issued to the Westcoaster.ca about a 75-metre trespass.

"The golf course has trespassed onto the adjacent property owned by Stomma Investments, cutting trees and vegetation to a point at least 75 metres past the property line and altering water flow.

"Based on advice from consultants, Stomma Investments is concerned about the future potential for trees to blow down as a result of the newly created exposure to winter-storm winds along this corridor and other sections of the freshly exposed property boundary.

Stomma said one of the proposed golf fairways has also altered the headwater of an existing stream (Alder Creek) that flows through its 30-hectare property.

Stomma Investments also complained that garbage, once buried in a closed municipal landfill, became exposed after trees were cleared within a 50-metre no development zone.

Paul Garvie, CEO of Cutting Edge Golf International Ltd., a company involved in the golf course's construction, confirmed the trespass.

"There was a line crossed," he said, "but definitely, totally by accident.

"I don't know how it happened."

"I believe there is discussions with the landowner going on.

"I have no comment at this time until things get squared away."

George Banning, project manager for Marine Drive Properties Ltd., said some trees were inadvertently taken down along the proposed Wild Pacific Trail.

Banning said he, St. Jacques, Martin and Schramm walked the trail, after which he and Martin flagged it.

Banning said garbage on the closed dump was exposed after wind knocked trees down along the peripheral edge of the dump.

His company, said Banning, has hired environmental consultants to test runoff and those tests have come back.

"In all cases there's nothing of any significance that would harm the environment."

Banning said workers have packed rock on the side of the dump as part of remedial action.

St. Jacques said despite the problems, Marine Drive Properties is going "above and beyond" what's required and expects the Wild Pacific Trail will be spectacular.

"The trail will be absolutely phenomenal.

"I don't think they're going in there and blundering through," she added.

"You don't do a development of this size without some bumps to it. The reality of life is there are going to be some things that happen that we need to keep an eye on, monitor and fix. We just need to work together and keep an eye on it."