

Protecting nature is guiding rule at Tampa Palms

Since its conception in 1985, the guiding principal of the golf course design at Tampa Palms has been to preserve and protect the delicate beauty of the natural environment.

The property on which the course is built lies within the flood plains of the Hillsborough River and great care was taken during the construction of the course to ensure that the "natural areas" on and around the course were not disturbed. The associated residential community has been laid out in such a manner to preserve 50 percent of its original acreage for the development of parks, green spaces, nature preserves and other important components such as wildlife corridors and buffers.

Our commitment here at Tampa Palms, in the community and on the golf course, to preserve and protect the flora and fauna communities found in this area is not an imposed restriction, it is basic to the original design ideal.

Our plan for the future is to learn more about the techniques and practices available that will allow us to maximize the potential for this property as a sanctuary for the increasingly stressed populations of Florida wildlife.

As development of the Interstate 75 corridor proceeds, we are seeing wildlife populations such as deer and turkey increase as they seek supporting habitat and relief from the stress of sharing space with

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commercial and residential development.

All this planning has helped make the golf experience at Tampa Palms a very enjoyable one. Not only can one play a championship course designed by Arthur Hills, but one experiences a journey through an ancient Florida wetland, complete with encounters of wildlife such as osprey, hawks, alligators and numerous other species of birds and animals. Having blended golf and nature together in harmony at Tampa Palms is something we are proud to have and are working hard to ensure it remains that way.

Suggestions I have for anyone who wants to write their certification program for environmental planning are:

1. Talk with the architect of the golf course and find out what his design concepts were for your course.

2. Talk with the developers of the community associated with your course (if applicable) and find out their intentions for creation of preserves and green spaces within the boundaries of the community.

3. Develop and implement a long-range plan (2-5 years) for golf course projects such as the building and location of nest boxes.

4. Develop and implement a comprehensive IPM program for your golf course.

5. Establish good working relationships with local authorities such as the county extension agencies, local parks departments, County EPC and your respective water management district. Get to know people within these agencies on a first name basis.

6. Conduct your daily operations in a professional manner. Work within the limits that have been established for pesticide and water use. Be responsible for your management practices.

7. Educate your staff and your golfing membership as to the benefits of the Audubon program. Stress to them the importance of managing environmentally sensitive areas in a safe and effective manner.

8. Do a thorough job of documenting your efforts that you put forth when working on projects that you have selected for your course. Remember that a photo will tell a story within itself. Notes and photographs will come in handy when writing your certification program.

Above all, don't get discouraged with the program and think that it is going to take up too much of your precious time that as we already know, all superintendents are short on. You must set some time aside for the start-up program, but hopefully some of your staff can help once the program gets under way.

I would be happy to answer questions that anyone might have about Tampa Palms involvement with the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program. Feel free to give me a call at (813) 972-3375.

Greg Plotner

Tampa Palms Golf & Country Club

Why should my course join the ACSP?

As we all know, there is a growing negative perception about the golf course environment and the management programs practiced. As a member of the ACSP, your course will:

- Receive advice to improve current project efforts and suggestions for new conservation projects.
- Be recognized for its commitment to wildlife and environmental quality.
- Provide wildlife habitat and also add beauty and distinction to the golf course while enhancing the enjoyment of a game of golf.
- Provide financial savings from reduced maintenance costs and conservation measures.
- Help preserve a healthy, diverse and beautiful landscape for future generations.
- Set a positive example for others to follow.