

ACSP CERTIFICATION

What Does It Mean to You?

By Shelly Foy

I don't know how long I have been urging Florida golf course superintendents to join the Audubon International's Cooperative Sanctuary program. Now with the publishing and distribution of the Florida Golf Course BMP Manual the past few months, there are even more excellent reasons and motivation to join.

First, many of those BMPs were based on guidelines suggested by Audubon International. Second, several cities and counties have said that golf courses would be exempt from their local fertilizer ordinances if they followed the new BMPs. To follow the BMPs you need to have a plan. What better plan than the AI Cooperative Sanctuary Program to help you fill out the checklist in the back of the BMP manual?

If you are reading through Audubon International's Web sites (www.auduboninternational.org or www.golfandenvironment.org), chances are you might run across this list of the "Top Ten Reasons to get Certified." I think there is a lot we can add to this list and I encourage you to do so by sending me an e-mail at sfoy@usga.org.

TOP TEN REASONS TO GET CERTIFIED

- Do the right thing for the environment
- Enjoy a new and rewarding aspect of your job and be able to share it with others
- Gain positive publicity for your golf course
- Better organize and coordinate your environmental management efforts
- Track environmental improvements
- Save money through reduced resource use
- Build your skill set and your resume
- Promote your stewardship efforts
- Be recognized as a community and golf industry environmental leader
- Gain valuable feedback from Audubon International

It is plain as the nose on your face that environmental issues in general and concerning golf courses specifically aren't going away. You guys are always interested in citing peer-reviewed studies when arguing about environmental activists coming after golf courses. Well, here are some reviews from your peers about what the Cooperative Sanctuary has meant to them and their golf courses. Read what your peers have to say about the program. If you can't believe them, who will you believe?

Your top ten reasons are right on the target. The only other one I can think of... Best and most practical program available to ensure highest standards of environmental stewardship in the Golf Industry... and of course Audubon International's track record speaks for itself. Bill Iwinski, PGA, Golf Course Manager, Ironwood Golf Course

Since we have become certified, it has heightened our awareness of everything around us. We now notice how rapidly our (wildlife) populations are increasing, such as osprey, blue heron, red fox and many other animals. We have reduced significantly our most toxic pesticides to near zero and always are looking for the safest methods available. Fred Klauk, Superintendent, TPC at Sawgrass, Ponte Vedra Beach

Water quality has greatly improved over the past year. Visually the lakes are no longer full of algae and weeds and the aquatic plants and wildlife are thriving.

Since my arrival here at Audubon CC, I have totally changed the way fertilizers and chemicals are used, especially around the lakes. Fertilizer is NO longer thrown into the lakes and chemicals are used as needed.

I have also started a bank naturalization plan which catches and filters any runoff going into the lakes. The golfers are also happy because this catches their golf balls. I plan to make

these areas wider in the future.

This project is its infant stage. I have had great response from the community on my efforts. I will continue to use BMPs to reduce costs and improve the environment. Ryan J. Costello, CGCS, Audubon Country Club, Naples

I believe the majority of our members are really interested in protecting our environment and participation in this program is one way to demonstrate this interest. Then there is the matter of community pride. It's kind of nice to have our little golf course appear in the same list containing the names of some of the most famous courses in the world.

In a broader sense, we need to be aware of the 'bad rap' that golf seems to be gaining; that we are the 'bad guys' polluting and destroying the environment without caring. Our participation in the ACSP along with that of so many other courses seems to provide a powerful message that this game, played and enjoyed by so many millions throughout the world, is, in fact, a responsible member of the world society. Jim Toth, Six Lakes Country Club

I don't think it's an option (to join the ACSP for Golf). What better way is there to showcase your environmental efforts and prove that golf and nature can be harmonious? Our efforts clearly show that golf cares about the environment. Scott Welder, Golf Course Superintendent, Walt Disney World

As we all know, golf course superintendents are environmentalists.

Being a member of Audubon International helps show our commitment to protecting the environment and providing habitat for Florida's wildlife. Robert R Bittner CGCS, The Club Pelican Bay

Achieving certification as an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary was a goal that brought immense satisfaction once accomplished. I always believed I was a good steward of the environment, but the program enabled me to quantify my achievements as well

as provide me tools to demonstrate the value of the golf course and the programs that we have in place. In a nutshell, it is the right thing to do and it feels good!

Darren J. Davis, Director of Golf Course Operations, Olde Florida Golf Club

The Habitat Golf Course just went through our site visit for recertification last week. It was nice to be able to showcase our golf course not only as a golf course, but as a sanctuary to numerous species of birds and animals. I feel very fortunate to be able to preserve over 200 acres of habitat suitable for maintaining wildlife, so that all generations to come will enjoy. Jim Moller, GCS, IGM@The Habitat

I believe when you have everyone involved, you have a higher long-term success rate. This generates more creativity and support for programs that may not be well received initially by the members. I see my role in the ACSP as 'facilitator.' I enjoy helping bring other people's ideas to the table and helping them to gain a better understanding of how these programs impact our club. Audubon provides a tremendous amount of depth. Kenyon Kyle, Golf Course Superintendent, Shadow Wood Country Club

The fact that we are a certified sanctuary is just as important in our decision making as sound agronomic practices. Matthew Taylor, Golf Course Superintendent, Royal Poinciana Golf Club

For us the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses was a natural fit. It reinforced the ongoing stewardship efforts that we had been involved in for several years. The certification process, from beginning to end, was an education for my staff, my membership and me.

As golf and environmentalism continue their travel down the same path, the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses sets goals and procedures that can put your course on the leading edge of environmental awareness and promote your efforts throughout the

industry as well as your local community.

The role of today's golf course superintendent must include an awareness of our environment. Golf Course Maintenance Operations are scrutinized by employers and the public alike. Involvement in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses proves that your operation is committed to a higher environmental standard.

Once you take the first step, you'll find the hardest part was taking that step. Set certification as a goal for your career at your club. Your knowledge of your property and understanding of your complete operation will increase as you go through the process. It's a win-win! **Kyle D. Sweet, CGCS, The Sanctuary Golf Club**



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My club's involvement in the ACSP is a statement to our members, our residents and neighbors alike that our maintenance programs are well planned and executed; and deliver the highest in turf quality and environmental care. We do it right and want everyone to know about it. The ACSP is a well respected environmental leader and to be positively associated to such an organization will only benefit the club. The Cooperative program costs nothing and is a great way to show your community you care. **Ryan J Costello, CGCS, Audubon Country Club**

As the program succeeds club officials, members of the management team and influential golfers are infected by the positive results. Read on:

Hammock Dunes has two courses which are certified by the ACSP. The program has been well received by the membership. It has caused us to focus our attention on our beautiful environment and to seek methods to maintain and enhance nature's great gift to us. It also bought our community together behind a noble endeavor. **Bob Haley, MD**

It gives you a chance to share your passion for wildlife with others and then see that passion spread throughout the entire community. **Peggy Ogden, Landscape Manager Arlington Ridge Country Club**

The ACSP has provided us with a method to perform self analysis of our BMP's. It gives us guidance on how our cultural practices have a positive impact on the environment. Everybody is on the GREEN bandwagon these days and anything that we as a company can share with governmental agencies is viewed in a positive light.

As an Audubon Certified Golf Course we are often used as a model club for responsible stewardship. The ACSP was the first step in propelling our club into a leadership role in Sarasota County. The County Commissioners look at this club in a very positive light and often solicit our input as it relates to environmental issues. The club continues to be recognized for our environmental leadership.

The cost to join the ACSP was low but the benefits have been substantial. I highly recommend this to all golf courses. At the very least it will bring about a self assessment to determine where you are and what you can do to improve. **Jim Schell CCM, General Manager, Venice Golf & Country Club**

As a leader of the Flagler Audubon Society, I wanted to gain first-hand insight into the AI programs for golf courses. I am really impressed with the overall quality of the programs and in how extremely well the programs are being managed at Hammock Dunes. I plan to propose that my own golf course apply to join this program, **Neil Davies, Co-President, Flagler Audubon Society.** (Quotes from Hammock Dunes Creekside Course site visit recertification)

Everything we've done as a result of participation in the program has enabled us to be better stewards of the 200 acres of land we control. We have been amazed at how little cost and little effort there can be in a program making a golf course more compatible with the environment. To anyone considering the program, I would point out that they should expect a great deal of interest and support from their membership. **Fred Yarrington, The Hole in the Wall Golf Club**

Efforts to achieve designation as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary have generated interest, participation, and appreciation of what is required to create and maintain our habitat and ecosystem. We have done this while still maintaining and interacting in a compatible fashion with a quality golf facility. Everyone in the FoxFire community is proud of this accomplishment. **Ted Beisler, General Manager, FoxFire Golf and Country Club**

The open space of our golf courses and community is utilized not only by golfers, but is a habitat for a variety of wildlife and plant species. Our goal in being part of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program is to manage our golf courses in a matter that is conducive to maintaining and enhancing the environment. - **Robert**

Norton, General Manager, Tournament Players Club at Prestancia

The Green Committee is keenly aware of our interest in mitigation efforts to enhance habitat and are supportive of suggestions for plantings that provide food and cover for birds and other small animals. I think it is important to have members of the club involved with Audubon activities, as it is an avenue for them to become stake holders in the Club, its golf course and our community. **Dr. H. Bernton, Chairman, Audubon Committee and Member, Windstar Country Club**

I have the ability to provide support for projects the superintendent feels will enhance the ACSP. From a corporate perspective I am able to gather the financial support, and from a club standpoint, I can involve our members. Involvement brings knowledge, and the more a club is involved, the greater our ability to educate not only our members, but our critics as well. **Susie Stiegmann, General Manager, Shadow Wood Country Club**

What a wonderful sense of achievement it is to know that the participation of Frenchman's Reserve in the ACSS has had an immediate effect on the wildlife and the fragile flatwoods ecosystem that they inhabit. Having finally completed this intensive certification process, I am thrilled to report that we are already seeing dramatic changes and improvements throughout the golf course. **Elizabeth Gilmour, Landscape Superintendent, Frenchman's Reserve, Palm Beach Gardens.**

Programs such as this represent the types of positive partnerships that need to be created across the country. This type of an effort is the only way that we can positively deal with the many, serious environmental issues that we face as a nation. **EPA Administrator, Christine Todd Whitman, presenting Audubon International with the EPA Region 2 2001 Environmental Quality Award.**