



The 16th hole at Juliette Falls Golf Club near Dunellon. Photo by Steve Keller.

Juliette Falls GC Certified 'Signature Sanctuary'

Juliette Falls Golf Club recently achieved designation as a Certified Silver Audubon International Signature Sanctuary. Signature certification is awarded only to new developments that are designed, constructed, and maintained according to Audubon International's precise planning standards and environmental disciplines. The focus of the Signature Program is to promote sound land-management practices and appropriate land-use changes based on sound scientific research.

Developed by Vikings, LLC as an amenity to a planned development in Dunnellon, the 18-hole, John Sandford-designed golf course is west of Ocala off SR 40. The name of the development came from an early settlement in the area, the town of Juliette, founded in



Steve Keller, superintendent, Juliette Falls GC

1845. The farming and phosphate mining village stood on what is now the Juliette Falls property.

Florida's fourth largest natural spring, Rainbow Springs, is located nearby and forms the spectacular Rainbow River one mile from the project. The property has 4 acres of lined, manmade lakes, 2,000 linear feet of naturalized shoreline, two restored wetlands and six created ones, 30 acres of grassland – 20 preserved and 10 created – and a total of 90 acres in managed turf. The primary natural features on the property are the oak forest and Florida scrub with many wet habitats created for stormwater control and treatment.

In the southern portion of the project, which buffers the Rainbow Springs is a 136-acre conservation area where walking and biking trails have been laid through the forest following an old railroad bed that bisects the property from north to south.

"Throughout the Signature Program process, Juliette Falls Golf Club owners and staff have demonstrated their cooperation and willingness to make decisions that positively affect wildlife habitat, water conservation, and the ecosystems that sustain life," said

Signature Programs Director, Nancy Richardson. "Their commitment to environmental excellence will continue to provide significant benefits to the natural resources on and surrounding the golf course property."

To date, only 13 other properties in Florida have achieved Silver Signature Certification.

"The golf course construction included installation of a series of groundwater monitoring wells that are sampled quarterly for water quality," said superintendent Steve Keller. "Our fertilizer and chemical use is very limited. We monitor our clipping yields from the fairways and spot apply as needed. Insect pests and weeds are not a big problem at this stage, so spot spraying and hand pulling is the norm."

"We did some testing on a microbe product called Aqua T. on a lake last February and experienced such great results that we are treating all the lakes. The owner wanted aquarium-quality water for the waterfalls and it took us awhile to get to that point. The microbes in Aqua T digest sludges and nitrates and have clarified the water. Since using it we have had no filamentous algae blooms, which is huge."

"They really did a fine job of building the maintenance complex with a 1/2-acre concrete court yard, ESD water treatment for both mix load and wash down pads. We have an air-conditioned grinding room and a propane-powered heating system. All the ceilings are insulated and have ventilation fans and duct work making it very comfortable even on the hottest or coldest days. In fact the whole development is a dual energy community which got some good press coverage."

"When the lakes were filled, we stocked some 3400 fish, including largemouth bass, bream, shiners, bluegill and catfish. We had a couple of albino catfish but they were easy prey for the Ospreys. There is lots of wildlife: turkey, deer, coyotes, fox, bobcats, eagles, kites, hawks, owls, kestrel, the whole range of small songbirds, wading birds, fox and red squirrels and gopher tortoise."

- Joel Jackson