

FGCSA's Golf BMP Certification Program

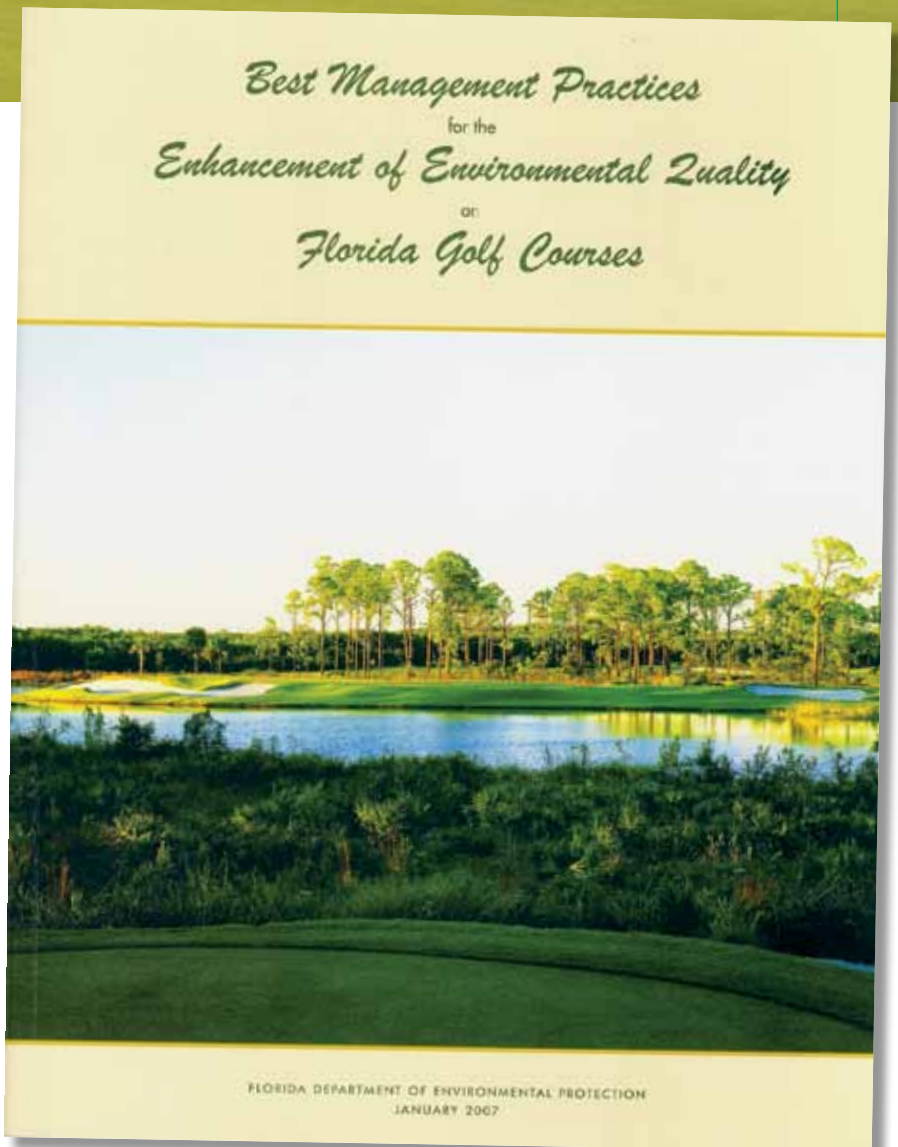


By Joel Jackson, FGCSA Executive Director

In the turmoil and uncertainty of local fertilizer ordinance regulations the past few years, Matt Taylor, CGCS from the Royal Poinciana Club in Naples suggested that the FGCSA look into a Golf BMP certification program. The program is meant to especially document a superintendent's knowledge and expertise when applying fertilizers and pesticides. It will be more extensive than – but similar to – the Green Industry BMP certification program which gives landscapers in some cities and counties the ability to apply fertilizers during the infamous blackout periods by passing a GIBMP certification exam.

Some local governments exempted golf courses initially from the onerous and unfounded fertilizer blackout periods which generally covered a four-month period from July through October. However, the latest rounds of local rule making in Collier County and Vero Beach did not include those exceptions and superintendents had to fight to get recognition of the special nature of the golf course business and how consistent plant nutrition was a necessity.

Thus, the idea was born to create a Golf BMP training and examination program that would proactively show the Golf Industry intention to protect the environment and support science-based regulation. With the help of Mike Thomas of the FLDEP and Dr. Laurie Trenholm of the University of Florida, and the work of the FGCSA BMP Committee, the program has taken shape and we hope to roll out the initial schedule of presentations and examinations in early 2012. Additionally, we sought the official recognition of the program from the Dept. of Environmental Protection.



Certification in the Golf BMPs provides official documentation of your environmental stewardship.

We are pleased to share DEP's response to our request with this letter dated October 31, 2011 addressed to FGCSA President Mark Kann:

Dear Mr. Kann:

Thank you for your September 1, 2011, letter to The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). We are pleased that our long partnership with Florida's golf course industry has produced yet another milestone in public-private environmental stewardship.

We commended the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association (FGCSA) on its new industry certification program in Best Management Practices (BMPs). DEP is encouraged that the FGCSA has made the "Green Industry BMPs" a prerequisite to this new, advanced level of certification. In doing so, the FGCSA has set a high standard for environmentally-sound management of one of Florida's most important industries. FGCSA's actions seek to comprehensively understand sustainable course management, and how those actions affect the surrounding environment and water resources.

For two decades, the FGCSA has been a true partner with DEP, promoting environmental stewardship and the development of BMPs for golf courses and urban landscapes. The assistance, cooperation, and expertise of our members had been instrumental in the development

of DEP's 1995 and 2007 manuals addressing golf courses, the influential 1998 *Agrichemical Handling* manual, and the Green Industries BMP manuals for urban turf and landscape management outside the golf course. The FGCSA's support for these manuals, DEP's model ordinances and the Protection of Urban and Residential Environments and Water Act played a substantial role in the state's ability to address non point sources of pollution.

The Florida Golf Course BMP Certification Program for the Enhancement of Environmental Quality on Florida Golf Courses has been created with full cooperation and review of the University of Florida and DEP's technical staff. With your partnership, we are convinced this training and certification will be as comprehensive as the DEP manual on which it is based.

Again I commend the FGCSA on the excellent program developed for Florida's golf course industry. I hope this inspires the development of similar programs in other states.

Sincerely,
Herschel T. Vinyard Jr
Secretary

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