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The Savannah Course at Stevinson Ranch Golf Club is another successful example of golf course construction within a sensitive site. About two hours southeast of San Francisco, this project is in the Audubon Signature Sanctuary Program. Again, the key was to preserve and design around the significant wetland and habitat areas. At Stevinson Ranch, the course actually wrapped around sensitive areas, creating a huge wildlife sanctuary. Golfers can bird watch many different species. Although we did not physically impact any habitat while building the course, permitting the project was contingent on mitigation. In other words, in order to build the project, we had to agree to create roughly 100 acres of specific habitat, including wetland, riparian and savannah landscapes. Again, a team of experts was assembled to ensure the habitats were properly located and developed. Also, a critical concern was linkage, enabling the wildlife to migrate, nest and feed throughout the areas.

Golf course drainage was not allowed into sensitive areas. Buffer areas were developed to prevent any adverse impacts. Careful and thoughtful planning of the course around and within the sensitive areas protected the natural process and added to the character, as well playing characteristics of the course.

A good design process entails careful analysis of sensitive areas; developing a team of consultants to create solutions that preserve the environment and enhance the course; and working carefully with permitting agencies to keep everyone informed and understanding guidelines. It entails implementing strategies in a conscientious and conservative way and ensuring that neither the quality of golf nor the environment is diminished with the final product. Using the proper strategies for sites that were once considered questionable or marginal can yield rewarding and challenging golf courses. There can be little doubt that a well-designed course, like no other playing field, offers everyone the opportunity to play a game in which nature is not a beautiful distraction, but also the ultimate challenge.