

Environmental Stewardship Produces Economic Advantages

By Anthony L. Williams

The term “environomics” is a reference to a synergistic blend of environmental stewardship and economics. The superintendent who elevates his programs to this level is truly setting a high standard of excellence.

The debate continues as to the actual value of a detailed environomic program. So how do you measure the value of stewardship? The first step is to establish environomic milestones (case studies) that are based on three factors: the protection and enhancement of natural resources; the establishment of quality playing conditions while creating a memorable overall golf experience; and the implementation of financial strategies.

It is critical that these milestones are documented with detailed records and pictures. This will allow you to make critical decisions based on property-specific data.

We will review three environomic milestones at the Stone Mountain Golf Club by Marriott (SMGC) in Stone Mountain, Ga. As a result of these programs, the SMGC was the recipient of the National Public Course and Overall Winner of the 2006 Golf Course Superintendents Association of America/GolfDigest Environmental Leaders in Golf Award, the Grand Award in the golf course category of the 2006 Green Star Contest sponsored by the Professional Grounds Management Society, and most recently, the 2007 “Because Green Matters Award” presented by Project EverGreen.

These environmental and green industry successes coupled with quality playing conditions and outstanding financial results create a powerful business model.

Continued on page 78

PHOTO 1



*This native grass and wildflower area (Yellow Daisy, *Helianthus porteri*) on No. 11 of the Lakemont course at the Stone Mountain Golf Club is a designated no-spray zone that provides habitat and forms a vegetative buffer around the water feature.*

PHOTO 2



General Manager Randy McMichael, Director of Grounds Anthony Williams and Director of Engineering Patty Gomer place the 80th nest box at the Evergreen Marriott Conference Resort/Stone Mountain Golf Club commemorating Marriott's 80th anniversary and deep environmental commitment on Earth Day, April 22, 2007.



QUICK TIP

If you're still wondering about the right time to switch from that old, quick-release granular product to a predictable, slow-release fertilizer for season-long application, now is the time. No matter what ingredients are added to a fertilizer product to make it slow-release, the majority of the granule is the substrate. Increases in prices of substrates have affected us all. Global demand for fertilizer, the U.S. ethanol boom, increased fuel prices and how the U.S. dollar has fallen significantly over the last few years are top reasons. Make your fertilizer work harder by calling your Agrium Advanced Technologies representative today. Call your mother on mother's day, too. She has worked hard for you.

Continued from page 77

Nest box program

The first SMGC environomic milestone we will evaluate is the nest box program. This program was implemented with less than \$750 invested in construction materials.

The construction and monitoring of the boxes was conducted by volunteers and management staff. The nest box program consists of 80 nest boxes. The 80th nest box was installed with a special logo celebrating Marriott's 80th Anniversary in the spring of 2007. There are seven different designs in the nest box inventory to encourage the nesting of blue birds, screech owls and bats.

The SMGC nest box program housed more than 300 fledglings last year. This program was instrumental in the SMGC becoming certified in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program and also helped generate more than 50 articles/press items. These articles were featured in many leading magazines and newspapers, including *GolfDigest* and the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*.

The summary of this environomic milestone is simple. For a tiny investment, the SMGC expanded the usable habitat on the course, increased memorable wildlife sightings and

began a community volunteer and outreach system. These programs culminated in a major marketing and public relations effort that spread the details of this worldwide work. Overall, not a bad first step toward a greener future.

The next step featured an aggressive integrated pest management program (IPM). This milestone is quite complex, but the rewards are worth the work.

The SMGC began its IPM program with an investment in human capital. Through internal and external training/testing, the club increased from two licensed chemical applicators in 2005 to six licensed applicators in 2006 and 2007. Three applicators are licensed in multiple categories. This extra training allows for better scouting and preventive programs while eliminating the use of outside contractors.

This philosophy led to a chemical-use reduction initiative, which included returning 12 acres of maintained areas back to native grasses and wildflowers (there was no seed expense in this program). These areas were designated as no-spray zones and considerably reduced the amount of chemicals applied at the property.

The club also improved documentation of agronomic factors such as pest histories, weather conditions, soil samples, tissue samples and water quality testing to allow precise

product and rate selection. The synergy created by this program resulted in a \$28,000 savings in 2006 compared to the previous year's actual expense.

Industry service

The third SMGC environomic initiative is industry service. To help grow the golf industry, a property that is environomically sound will actively participate in a variety of industry events. These events can be local meetings or regional or national industry events. These events might or might not generate revenue for the property, but they always create opportunity for growth.

In 2006, the SMGC hosted environmental tours for superintendents from as far away as Spain, Japan, England and Russia, as well as welcoming local schools and civic groups. They also hosted two GCSAA regional seminars, as well as the Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Association annual meeting and trade show. They also hosted events for the Professional Grounds Management Society (Georgia Branch) and the Georgia Golf Environmental Foundation. These events allowed the SMGC to tap into a huge resource — the green industry. The SMGC established relationships that validated the club's successes and allowed training, education and fund raising to flourish.

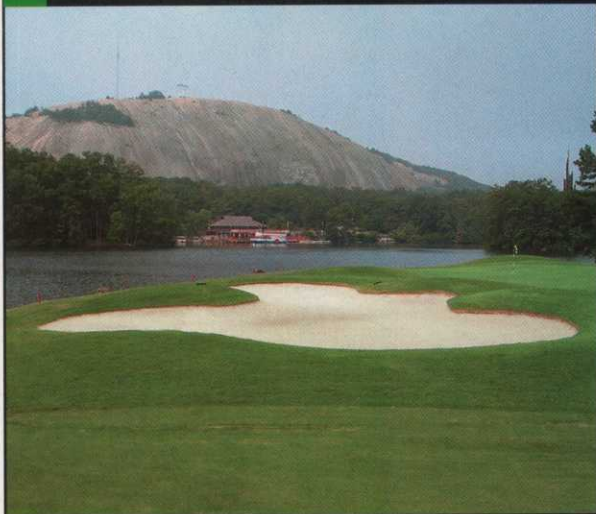
In summary, a strong environomic program starts with a basic commitment to environmental and economic excellence. Over time, these programs can grow and generate breakthrough results. In 2006, the total SMGC environomic program resulted in a \$47,000 savings in expenses, improved playing conditions and three national awards. To truly succeed in the golf/green industry, you must be willing to go the extra mile. To experience breakthrough results and reach new environomic milestones, it will also require an extra degree of commitment and documentation throughout your operation.

Remember that at 211 degrees, water is merely hot — but at 212 it boils and creates steam. This 1 degree of temperature difference in water allows for a transformation so powerful that it can power a locomotive. The SMGC is an example of a property giving that extra degree of effort and achieving outstanding environomic results.

Will you commit to that extra degree of environomic excellence within your operation? Can you afford not to?

Certified golf course superintendent Anthony L. Williams is the director of grounds for the Stone Mountain Golf Club and is a 21-year veteran of Marriott Golf. He serves on the board of directors for the Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Georgia Golf Environmental Foundation, the Georgia Branch of the Professional Grounds Management Society and the Georgia Turfgrass Association.

PHOTO 3



The Stone Mountain Golf Club is able to operate a successful golf business in harmony with a unique ecosystem by implementing a plan that protects the property's natural resources while creating a memorable golf experience. This picture features the par-5 opening hole of the Lakemont course, Stone Mountain Lake and, of course, Stone Mountain in the background.

TURFGRASS TRENDS

SECTION STAFF

Managing Editor

Curt Harler
440-238-4556; 440-238-4116 (fax)
curt@curtharler.com

Graphic Designer

Kristen Morabito
216-706-3776; 216-706-3712 (fax)
kmorabito@questex.com

Golfdom Staff Contact

David Frabotta
216-706-3758; 216-706-3712 (fax)
dfrabotta@questex.com

INDUSTRY ADVISORS

Jerry Quinn

John Deere

Chris Derrick

Agrium Advanced Technologies

Scott Welge

Bayer Environmental Science

Carmen Magro

Floratine

EDITORIAL REVIEW BOARD

Dr. Rick Brandenburg

N.C. State University

Dr. Vic Gibeault

University of California

Dr. Garald Horst

University of Nebraska

Dr. Richard Hull

University of Rhode Island

Dr. Eric Nelson

Cornell University

Dr. A.J. Powell

University of Kentucky

Dr. Eliot C. Roberts

Rosehall Associates

Dr. Pat Vittum

University of Massachusetts

CONTACT US:

Web site: www.turfgrasstrends.com

Reprints: TurfgrassTrends@reprintbuyer.com