

**MICHIGAN TURFGRASS ENVIRONMENTAL
STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**

**Debbie Swartz
Department of Crop and Soil Sciences
Michigan State University**

Background and Purpose

Within the golf industry, environmental sensitivity has long been recognized as a key to the future of the sport. During the last decade, the philosophy of golf course design and construction has changed. Architects have moved toward working with the existing landscape to preserve the natural features rather than making stark changes to the land. Many courses have focused on the environmental resources of their properties and have taken measures to protect them from negative impact. In order for Michigan's golf course industry to prosper in the future, an effort is needed to continually elevate the environmental stewardship of the golf industry and provide recognition for those accomplishments to the public.

The Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Program is intended to organize efforts of the turfgrass industry, state agencies, MSU, and environmental advocacy groups to advance the environmental stewardship of the turfgrass industry and to recognize environmental achievements. The program was developed at MSU with support from the Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan Turfgrass Foundation and the Golf Association of Michigan.

Mission

The mission of the Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Program is:

- to advance the environmental stewardship of Michigan's golf industry by increasing the awareness and understanding of Michigan's environmental resources, the potential impacts of golf turf management, and elevate the level of pollution protection;
- to enhance wildlife habitat, indigenous vegetation, and protect water resources on golf course properties;
- to clearly identify environmental laws and regulations and advance the compliance of the golf turf industry;
- to engage the golf industry, regulatory agencies, MSU, and environmental citizen groups in productive communication; and
- to recognize, promote, and award environmental stewardship achievements.

Program Principles

As part of a participant's commitment to environmental stewardship, they will sign the Program Principles which states that they will:

- promote and communicate best management practices to control potential sources of pollution
- comply with environmental laws and regulations
- adopt pollution prevention practices and prevent waste
- minimize inputs to the environment
- commit to the protection of the natural resources on the property
- protect water quality, wildlife habitat and native vegetation.

Pollution Prevention

The Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Program is divided into two distinct program areas; the first is pollution prevention. The pollution prevention section includes materials designed to clearly identify environmental laws and regulations impacting the turfgrass industry and promote compliance with those laws and regulations. It is also designed to promote pollution prevention strategies and to recognize environmentally sound management practices.

Information in this section is organized in modules that are currently available to program participants. They include:

1. Site Evaluation
2. Pesticide Handling and Application
3. Pesticide Mixing and Loading Pad
4. Pesticide and Fertilizer Storage
5. Wellhead Protection
6. Fuel Storage

Environmental Enhancement Section

The Environmental Enhancement section is currently under development and will focus on advancing the “green space” value of golf course properties. It will be dedicated to promoting wildlife habitat, indigenous vegetation, and water quality protection and will involve partnering with advocacy groups that are dedicated to these areas in Michigan. Groups like the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, MUCC, Michigan Environmental Council, Pheasants Forever, Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited, various watershed councils and several land conservancy groups are examples of successful organizations that have a great deal to offer golf course properties.

The Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship System

Step One:

To participate in the Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Program, a golf course property manager must attend a Stewardship Seminar. At the seminar, program modules are distributed and small group sessions are held to discuss specific topic areas related to fuel storage, wellhead protection, fertilizer and pesticide storage, handling and application. Each module is designed as a self-assessment tool that will allow the manager to understand the potential for pollution to occur on their property and how to reduce the risk. In addition, they will gain an understanding of the laws and regulations associated with each of the focus areas and how to apply them to their individual site.

Step Two:

The materials are taken back to the property where the golf turf manager completes the self-assessment program modules.

Step Three:

The golf property requests a site visit from the Turf Stewardship Team. During the site visit, materials from the program modules are reviewed and a three-year environmental action plan is developed. The golf property is then recognized as a Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Program Participant. Courses can become a Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Program Member if they:

(1) are in compliance with the major rules and regulations within the scope of the current program modules, (2) have no direct point source discharges to water resources, and (3) have adequate well protection.

Participant Fees

To participate in the program, an annual fee is required based on the type of golf course operation.

Participant	Membership Fee
Resort Properties	\$ 150.00
Private Golf Clubs	\$ 150.00
Daily Fee Operations	\$ 50.00/9 holes (\$150 max)
Municipal or Tax Funded Operations	\$ 75.00

Site Visit Fee

There is a \$200.00 half-day site visit fee per golf course. A site visit is required every three years to remain active in the program.

Upcoming Opportunities to Participate

The next two Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Program Seminars are scheduled for January 22, 1999, at the Holiday Inn South, Lansing, Michigan and on March 18, 1999, at the Sylvan Treetops in Gaylord, Michigan.

For More Information

For more information on the program or to register for the next workshop please contact Debbie Swartz at 517-353-3208 or Greg Lyman at 517-353-0860. They can also be contacted via e-mail at swartzd@pilot.msu.edu or lyman@msue.msu.edu.