

Editor's comment: The following letter from the Audubon Society of New York is the reply to the "The Wall Street Journal" article that appeared in the May 2 edition.

Editor
Wall Street Journal
200 Liberty Street
New York, New York 10281

To The Editor:

The article, "Golf Courses Are Denounced as Health Hazards," which appeared in the May 2, 1994 issue was biased, one-sided, and lacking in fact. It was obvious that the writer of the article had no intention of writing an objective piece. Although it is true that golf courses do take up space, and they do use water and chemicals, the intent of the article is to depict most golf courses as being just a tad better than a hazardous-waste site. Nothing could be further from the truth.

For the past three years, the Audubon Society of New York State has been working with golf courses in an effort to increase wildlife habitat, reducing water consumption, and minimize chemical use. Because over 1,000 golf courses are currently participating in our program, The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System, we know that there are golf course managers who care as much about the environment and wildlife as any "traditional" environmentalist.

Although over-use of chemicals is a common criticism leveled at golf courses, the quantities cited are frequently exaggerated. As an example of the effects of chemical use, one event is repeatedly offered which occurred years ago prior to the raising of everyone's environmental consciousness. Such events provide satisfying fodder for many writers looking for sensational "evidence," even if it is old news. What is more important is whether we learned from that event? I believe we have. Most of the golf course superintendents we work with have made great strides in minimizing the use of chemicals and water as both an economic consideration as well as an environmental decision. Most have expressed a commitment to making better and more sound environmental land management decisions based on an appreciation for the land and wildlife with which they work.

When compared to many other kinds of land development, golf courses are one of only a few types of "economic development" that results in an average of 150 acres of open space, trees, water, plants, and wildlife habitat on which people can relax. Many golf courses harbor rare and endangered species. Many of the people who manage golf courses have been involved in restoring native vegetation, establishing fields of wildflowers, designing nature trails on or near the golf course, and offering environmental education programs for students and the general public.

There is no question that everyone of us — golf course managers, homeowners, farmers, newspaper reporters, and those who work for environmental organizations — can do a better job of taking care of the environment. However, the goals that we set to improve our environmental efforts should be based on fact and reason, not on bias and fiction.

Sincerely yours,
Ronald G. Dodson, President



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