

**Audubon Cooperative
Sanctuary Program
criteria categories**

Environmental planning

Public Involvement

Wildlife Cover Enhancement

Wildlife Food Enhancement

Integrated Pest Management

Water Conservation

Water Enhancement

ACSP, Part 1 . . .

Nature's guardians

This is the first in a series of articles about the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, which we refer to as ACSP.

These articles are intended as teaching and educational sources to help those golf courses signed up for the program to successfully complete the program criteria and become certified. They are the result of a cooperative effort of the FGCSA and the USGA Florida office in Hobe Sound.

To become certified, participating courses must complete programs in seven different categories:

- Environmental planning
- Public Involvement
- Wildlife Cover Enhancement
- Wildlife Food Enhancement
- Integrated Pest Management
- Water Conservation
- Water Enhancement

We presently have more than 100 golf courses in the state signed up but only a small fraction of them have complete the program.

This series is an excellent avenue to help those attempting to become certified to overcome hurdles presently in their way.

"Public Involvement," the category covered by the first article, is probably the most difficult to complete. We think you will find the information very useful. Future issues of *The Florida Green* will contain articles on the other categories.

We encourage our industry affiliates to send in positive information. Anyone wishing to contribute helpful ideas on any of these categories should send that information to FGCSA headquarters or to the USGA office in Hobe Sound.

Enjoy!

Shelley Foy, Tom Benefield



Sign announces a no-hunt area as part of wildlife protection program at Gateway GC in Fort Myers is part of a "public involvement" project.

*Have the public
become involved
and enjoy it!*

BY PETER LEUZINGER

St. Charles (Ill.) CC

JEAN MACKAY

Audubon Society of New York

Many participants in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary program for Golf Courses look upon public involvement with mixed feelings.

On the one hand, they are desperate for golfers to support their management efforts and for the public to know that they are not dumping chemicals and wantonly destroying the environment. On the other, they are reluctant to approach members to invite their input, and worried about losing their status as a private club by involving "the public."

"Public Involvement" was not meant to be a road block. Rather, its intent is to help superintendents get the recognition



Members of Martin County Cub Scout Pack 888 took part in a nest box project at Summerfield GC in Stuart.

and support they deserve, increase golfer understanding of wildlife and environmental quality on the golf course, and let the public know that golf courses can be valuable community resources — whether or not the public ever gets to step on the course.

If thoughts about how to achieve “public involvement” are more than a little unsettling to you, then read on. There are plenty of ways to increase public understanding, educate members, and involve people in your environmental efforts without losing your status as a private club.

Remember, achieving public input does not mean you have to have an open

Tour groups might be made up of grade school children, young adults, biology clubs, Cub Scouts, senior golfers, women’s golf leagues, college students, local golf course superintendents, and don’t forget the “press.”

house for your community or base decisions on what your neighbors want. Think of “the public” as members of the local community who can help you with publicity, habitat enhancement, water monitoring, native plant selection, or other

environmental programs.

Also, don’t forget your members!

Informing your members of your involvement in the ACSP and inviting their participation is crucial to the long-term success of your program. If your club

A resource committee can be made up of fellow employees, golfers, and even people outside the golf course who bring expertise to the group. There are many people out there who are willing to donate their time and add their names to a project like the ACSP.

Do you have an opportunity to write an article for your state superintendent's association newsletter or a golf publication? Tell others about your commitment to environmental quality and describe the things you've done on your course.

reluctant to invite public participation, focus on educating members or regular golfers.

How do you reach members and the public?

Try any or all of these ideas. All have been successfully tested on a number of ACSP golf courses.

• **Resource committee.** A resource committee can be made up of fellow

employees, golfers, and even people outside the golf course who bring expertise to the group. There are many people out there who are willing to donate their time and add their names to a project like the ACSP.

The resource committee at St. Charles CC consists of a writer/promoter, a bird watcher, a handyman who builds and repairs birdhouses and feeders, a craftsman, one outdoor lover, and a local landscape architect and folklore expert.

Combine these talents with a golf course superintendent, who is used to wearing many hats, and you will be surprised how fast your programs take shape.

• **Clubhouse Display.** Don't forget to tell your members that you're involved in the ACSP. The easiest way to do this is to

Hiers receives first Audubon Steward Award

NAPLES — The world's first John James Audubon Steward Award was presented to William Timothy Hiers, CGCS, golf course manager of Collier's Reserve, a residential country club community here.

In making the presentation, Ronald Dodson, president of the Audubon Society of New York State, explained that the concept for the award had been developed several years ago as the highest recognition of leadership in the field of environmental responsibility.

"Tim's personal dedication and un-failing commitment to excellence made it clear to us that he should be the first to receive this important award," Dodson said.

Dodson and Hiers have worked together on several projects, most recently the design and construction of the Collier's Reserve golf course, the first ever to be awarded the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Signature designation. This rigorous process has made the Collier's Reserve course the international model for others to follow.

"Also to be commended is Collier Enterprises, the developer of Collier's Reserve," said Dodson. "It was their commitment to environmental excellence and the Signature program that not only gave Tim the opportunity to become involved, but also provided the necessary resources



Tim Hiers, right, golf course manager at Collier's Reserve in Naples, was the first recipient of the John James Audubon Steward Award. From left are Ron Dodson, president of the Audubon Society of New York State; architect Arthur Hills; and Jeffrey M. Birr, head of Collier Enterprises Real Estate operation.

to complete the project."

A family-owned company with roots that trace to the creation of Collier County in Southwest Florida, Collier Enterprises has significant interests in commercial and residential real estate, agriculture, financial services and oil and energy interests.

Hiers is an expert on "Integrated Plant Management," a holistic philosophy

which views the golf course as a complete entity. Featured by the United States Golf Association as environmental steward, he has assisted in the development of a national Environmental Management Policy for GCSAA.

Before joining Collier Reserve, Hiers — a former president of the FGCSA — had been golf course manager of the 56-hole St. John's Island Club in Vero Beach.

A simple trail through woods or grasslands can be enjoyed by members, staff and the public if you wish. A trail will also add to what your course has to offer members and guests.

post your registration art print and certificate in the clubhouse. You could also expand your display to include photographs of wildlife, plants, or natural areas of the course, you wildlife inventory, and information about the projects you've done.

- **Press Releases.** The ACSP will help you reach local papers with announcements about your environmental programs. You may strike up some friendships and develop some very positive reaction from the press. There is nothing like a front-page picture to bring positive attention to your golf course.

- **Brochure.** Make some simple pamphlets that detail your ACSP work. Leave the pamphlets at the reception desk, pro shop and lounge. Make your pamphlet available at career day in schools and the local garden club. Toot your horn a little!

- **Newsletter articles** at your golf course are a natural. You need new subject material anyway. How many times can you talk about defending your green speed? Fee free to use information from ACSP fact sheets or newsletters for your newsletter.

- **Wildlife reports.** Have golfers get involved in reporting and monitoring wildlife. Provide golfers with maps of the course and let them help you take inventory of the varied wildlife on the property.

You can also invite a local bird club to conduct a bird survey. A wildlife inventory will be valuable evidence that your course is hospitable to wildlife.

- **Adopt-A-School.** Sponsor a local school in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Schools. This is a sure way to let the community know you care about the environment. You might also offer one field trip to your course as part of your involvement with the school. To receive a school program brochure, just write or call New York Audubon Society.

- **Speaking engagements.** We all need to develop our communication skills. One wonderful way to do this is to begin talk-

ing to small groups, develop a slide presentation, and go on from there. You might speak with a local school class, garden club, home owners association, or superintendents' association.

Choose a topic you're comfortable with such as tree or shrub care, integrated pest management, environmental quality on your golf course, or your involvement with the ACSP. New York Audubon can make slides or a video available to help you present information to your members or to the public.

- **Wildlife walk.** Ask members who are interested in — or knowledgeable about — birds to host an early-morning walk to look for birds and other wildlife species on the course. Members who attend can add their sightings to the club's wildlife inventory. Providing coffee and doughnuts is a nice way to conclude the walk.

- **Journal articles.** Do you have an opportunity to write an article for your state superintendent's association newsletter or a golf publication? Tell others about your commitment to environmental quality and describe the things you've done on your course.

- **Tours.** Very basic golf course tours have a great impact on public perception. A successful outing demonstrates goodwill and will spread by word of mouth.

Tour groups might be made up of grade school children, young adults, biology clubs, Cub Scouts, senior golfers, women's golf leagues, college students, local golf course superintendents, and don't forget the "press." Not only will you spread the work about the ACSP, you may even recruit a future horticulture student.

- **Nesting Boxes.** These can be used as a tool for reaching out to the community. Make a few extra bluebird houses every year. Nest box giveaways to golfers, schools or the local cemetery association are greatly appreciated and stimulate interest in your ACSP.

You can also invite a local scout troop

or Eagle Scout to make and monitor your next boxes. St. Charles CC has 44 next boxes on the golf course and roadway along the course. This subtle statement along the roadside is sending a message to local traffic around the course.

- **Establish a library.** Books on natural habitat, building nest boxes, butterflies, bird identification, and environmental issues are a worthwhile service to your golfers, and can be checked out at the club.

- **Outreach programs.** Give the public an opportunity to use your grounds for something other than golf; i.e., local photography club, group art classes, and bird clubs can all benefit from the golf course.

- **Craft projects.** These projects may help provide funding for supplies needed for the ACSP. Wreaths made from wild grapevine and bittersweet are unique and popular. Just make sure to tag these as ACSP promotions.

- **Projects for kids.** Get kids involved in making bird feeders or houses for the course or their own backyards.

- **Nature Guide to the course.** Create a simple, hole-by-hole environmental guide for golfers. At each stop, you can point out interesting natural features or environmental projects. This can include native plants, nest boxes, unique trees, habitat areas, common wildlife, IPM practices, and/or water conservation measures.

- **Nature trail.** Are your natural areas large enough for you to create a nature trail? A simple trail through woods or grasslands can be enjoyed by members, staff and the public if you wish. A trail will also add to what your course has to offer members and guests.

- **Tournaments.** If you are hosting a tournament, use the opportunity to educate people about the environmental quality of your course. For example, highlight your ACSP involvement through the media or put up a simple display to show some of the environmental projects you've undertaken.