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BMPs vs ACSP: Different Aims and Both are Worthwhile

BY GRADY L. MILLER, PH.D.

I was recently asked to explain how the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF-IFAS) publication *Best Management Practices of Florida Golf Courses* (2nd edition, 1999) compares to the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program.

As a preface to an explanation let me first state that as a Land Grant University, the University is federally mandated to serve the citizens of this state. The Cooperative Extension Service is a partnership of county, state, and federal government that serves the citizens of Florida by providing information and training on a wide variety of subjects. Turfgrass science is one area of specialization where UF-IFAS has specialists that serve golf courses and other turfgrass production and maintenance industries.

The *Best Management Practices of Florida Golf Courses* book is intended as a reference guide for Florida golf course superintendents and regulatory agencies in their efforts to grow and maintain some of the most prestigious golf courses in the world.

The information contained in the book was compiled and written by more than 11 researchers, teachers and/or extension specialists. The recommendations in the book are as up-to-date as possible, and in most cases, are based on many years of research.

Much of the research that was used to generate this data was paid for by agencies such as the United States Golf Association, US EPA, Golf Course Su-

perintendents Association of America, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, various Florida water management districts, Florida Turfgrass Association, and the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association. Many other groups and individuals have likewise contributed toward research necessary for completing the publication.

The *Best Management Practices of Florida Golf Courses* was produced so as to provide a template and explanation of good turf management principles and also to provide information for green construction and reference values for irrigation water quality. The term "Best Management Practices" or BMPs has meaning on a number of different levels.

This IFAS publication *suggests* BMPs for golf course management, but they are not in the form of rule, law, or ordinance. The university is not a regulatory agency. In reality, many of the state's regulatory agencies defer to UF-IFAS in matters related to standards, due to our years of research experience on specific matters (e.g. nitrate leaching, water use, pesticide need, etc). We would like to think that policy decisions are substantiated with science, although we know that decisions are sometimes made based on political reasons.

In contrast to the IFAS publication related to turfgrass management, the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program presented by Audubon International (1991 inception) is a voluntary program designed to provide conservation management strategies for a golf course.

The primary goal of the program is to enhance wildlife habitat and protect natural resources. It is based around monitoring programs and implementing various stewardship projects. The primary financial supporters of this program are the USGA and the individual golf course members.

The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program recognizes six categories:

1. Environmental Planning – each club generates a written plan out-

lining their goals and proposed projects.

2. Wildlife & Habitat Management – emphasizes the management of non-play areas to provide habitat for wildlife.
3. Integrated Pest Management – developing a responsible program for controlling pests, ensuring a healthy environment for both people and wildlife.
4. Water Conservation – attention is directed toward irrigation systems, recapturing and reuse of water resources, maintenance practices, and turfgrass selection.
5. Water Quality Management – directs emphasis on impact of golf course chemical use on quality of lakes, streams, and groundwater sources.
6. Outreach & Education – focus is placed upon generating public awareness through education.

These six areas require extensive documentation and in many cases, implementation of projects to support or strengthen the golf course's efforts in environmental awareness and/or protection. As you can probably gather from this list, the Audubon program is taking a more holistic approach to evaluating the golf course environment, addressing the turf, water issues, wildlife, pest control, and community education.

The university's goal with developing BMPs for golf courses is primarily focused on growing quality turf in the most ecologically friendly way, but we do not specifically address the extensive monitoring or the community outreach and education components as outlined in the Audubon program.

It is my experience that most of the university-directed golf course turf programs are geared toward the people who manage the turf rather than the end user (e.g. the golfer). The Audubon outreach and education programs are designed primarily for the golfers and potential future golfers.

Which program is the best? They both serve an important function for the sustainable future of this industry. 🦋