

For years, now, I have heard many very wise members of the FGCSA tell us that we need to get on the offensive when it comes to environmental issues before it is too late. I always listened but did my own thing, never really wanting to rock the boat.

Maybe I just did not know how to “go on the offensive.” Maybe I was on the offensive and just did not know it. Recently the need to go on the offensive has become very clear to me.

It is not too late, but most of us can see that things are really changing quickly with the environmental movement. The push that started out years ago is snowballing into a very large swell and I am afraid most of us are missing it.

My 8-year-old son watches cartoons that talk about man-made global warming, pollution etc. My high school son asks me questions about the same type of issues and when I read his textbooks, I really get concerned. My daughter, who started college this year, has turned “green” in the past six months, and is being inundated with propaganda.

They are being taught that global warming is man-made, how pesticides are polluting our waterways and how we don’t need lawns. They say rock gardens are just as aesthetically pleasing, and that if you install native plants with drip irrigation, there will be no more problems.

In our area, Lee and Collier Counties and the City of Naples are enacting fertilizer ordinances which contain some restrictions that are not based on science but emotion. The big question to all of these counties and municipalities is, “Who is going to monitor these programs?”

For the longest time, I have been receiving e-mails from Joel Jackson recounting what happened at this city council meeting or that meeting. I read them but they usually dealt with the lawn-care companies and homeowners. Last week I got an email from someone requesting information about golf courses and our BMPs and who monitors us. Do we report use and other factors? The wise men were right; it did not take long after local governments had regulated homeowners and landscape companies’ use of fertilizers to turn the spotlight on us.

Last week I was speaking to Shelly Foy with the USGA regarding Audubon International’s

program for golf courses. She was telling me that a large number of golf courses have signed up for the program, and continue to pay the fees each year but have never begun work on certification.

Here is the part where I don’t want to sound preachy but at least cautionary: I understand how time flies by and that time is also very precious. Nevertheless, the Audubon program might be a great way for our profession to regulate itself. The alternative might be the local government in your area. I know the program is not for everyone, but why not? Having been fortunate to work for two superintendents who believed in the program, and having seen both programs for golf courses firsthand, I can tell you it is not that hard.

The Audubon program is very easy because most of the things required to become certified are things that many of us do regularly. The program gives you a format and the tools to document it. Do not say it; I know what you are thinking: “This guy comes from one of those high-budget clubs in Naples; sure it is easy for them.” Well, many of the fully certified clubs in the state are not high-budget operations.

In the past 12 months have you reduced water usage by removing a sprinkler head and installing native plants? Are you in the process of designing new irrigation systems to increase efficiency? Do you use ET rates to calculate nightly irrigation run times or use mulch or pine straw in landscape areas to reduce water loss? If you answered “yes” to any of the questions, you are well on your way to fulfilling the requirements for water conservation, one of the five areas of concern for the Audubon program. As I said, most of the things in the program are things that we all do already.

OK! Done. No more. In the Stewardship section of this issue, I have included a list of current Florida stewards for the Audubon program. If you need any information or encouragement please contact any of them.

I procrastinated long enough about writing this Presidents Message. I wasted enough time thinking about what to write, and moved it forward in my planner again and again.

I didn’t want to come across as preaching or giving you the same information repeatedly. I have tried to plead my case about something I firmly believe in and maybe some of those who read this will do something about it.

As I said, it’s time to take the offensive.

Enjoy the rest of your season and let us hope for a quiet, rainy summer season.

It’s Clearly Time to Go on Offense



Matt Taylor, CGCS President