



Manage Cart Traffic Proactively

Proactive traffic control can protect turf during the slow-growth winter season. Photo by Joel Jackson.

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A recent cold front came through our region and brought Chamber of Commerce weather conditions in most areas. While it is still considered warm for some migrating snowbirds, year-round Florida residents have appreciated the break from cool weather. Many golf facilities report that play has nearly doubled in the past week and this trend will continue as snowfall in northern states pushes the annual migration of golfers southward.

Cooler temperatures have slowed turf growth in Florida. This has had a positive impact in reducing mowing frequency and clipping production, as the turf is not growing as aggressively as it was several weeks ago. Prolonged low soil temperatures will eventually cause

turf growth to cease and bring with it unsightly conditions, especially in high-traffic areas.

The turf on most golf courses is still quite green and healthy at this time

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of year, but it is important to pay close attention to traffic patterns and be proactive in traffic diversion with ropes and stakes to maintain good golf course aesthetics. Preventing turf damage is much more effective at maintaining good turf quality than trying to encourage turf recovery once

it becomes damaged from cart traffic.

In addition to ropes and stakes, a rotating “resting hole” program has been effective at reducing turf wear from cart traffic. With this program,

holes Nos. 1 and 10 are deemed “cart path only” on week one, holes Nos. 2 and 11 on week two and so on. Proper signage and enforcement are necessary to make this policy effective.

At the end of the day, we must realize that sometimes we are our own worst enemy when it comes to turf damage from traffic. Just like we need traffic lights and stop signs, so too are traffic protocols needed on golf courses.

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