

Sugarloaf goes one better, adds environmental steward

By PETER BLAIS

CARRABASSETT VALLEY, Maine — Sugarloaf Golf Course here has taken environmental awareness to the next level by hiring environmental steward Kimberly Truskowski to keep the ski and golf resort in compliance with the Audubon International (AI) Cooperative Sanctuary Program and other environmental guidelines.

Having a full-time environmental steward at a golf/ski resort is rare. "I've run into a couple people who do some environmental education work at different resorts," Truskowski said. "But I think the numbers will grow. It just makes sense. A lot of these resorts are situated in areas of great natural beauty. It makes sense to combine that with an economic endeavor. We're trying to run a successful business here, but that doesn't mean we can't be sensitive to the natural environment and find better ways to do things."

"We have a Class A river here [the Carrabassett] and we want to make sure it stays that way. There is a sign you see as you drive up the access road to the resort that lets people know we have a commitment to the environment here and we would love their participation. We have an environmental code of conduct from top management on down. It is the 10 commandments of what we would like to see our management team do environmentally when they are planning a project."

The outdoor lifestyle first attracted Truskowski to Sugarloaf in the mid-1990s. She worked at the ski area through that initial winter and, with her experience working in greenhouses, applied for a job on the golf course as a landscaper.

Superintendent Ed Michaud was impressed with her background in environmental and recycling issues. Michaud had always wanted Sugarloaf to become involved in the AI program

GOLF AND THE ENVIRONMENT



Sugarloaf golf course superintendent Ed Michaud and environmental steward Kimberly Truskowski at the club.

and hired Truskowski to be both a landscaper and the point person to get the golf course involved with Audubon.

At the end of that first summer, then Sugarloaf President Warren Cook decided to expand Truskowski's duties on a resort-wide basis and made her position a year-round one.

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Renew America cites Signature Program

SELKIRK, N.Y. — Renew America has announced that the Audubon International Signature Program has received a Certificate of Environmental Achievement. It will be included in Renew America's Environmental Success Index, a database filled with successful environmental programs.

Each year, the national environmental non-profit Renew America conducts a nationwide search for programs that provide innovative solutions to tough environmental challenges.

Ann Slafer, Renew America's executive director, said: "The Environmental Success Index provides businesses, local governments and civic and environmental groups with practical proven models they can replicate. By recognizing the excellent work of these innovative programs, we help motivate the individuals involved to continue their efforts to improve the environmental quality of their communities and share their successes with others."

The index, available on the World Wide Web, includes programs under 20 different categories such as transportation efficiency, solid waste management, pollution Prevention and Open Space Protection. The Audubon International Signature Program is being honored in the category of Wildlife and Habitat Protection.

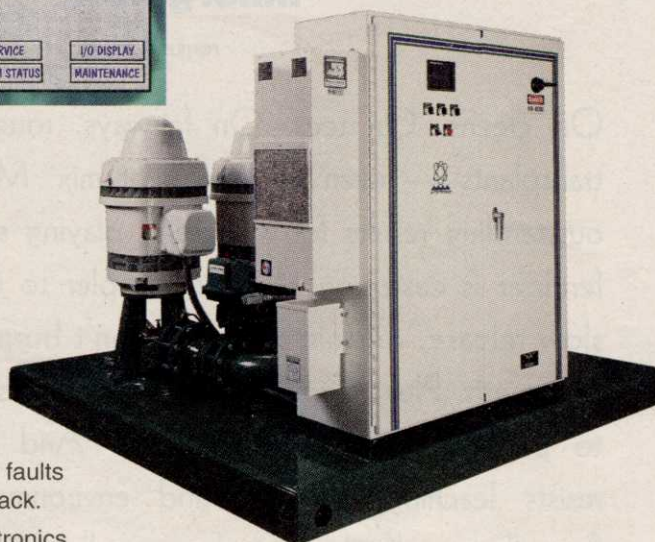
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Audubon Int'l publishes case studies

By JEAN MACKAY

To provide positive, tangible examples of what can be achieved through participation in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, Audubon International (AI) has published case studies from nine properties the program has certified. The case studies of public, private and tournament-style courses highlight major environmental achievements, including wildlife habitat management, resource conservation, and outreach and education initiatives.

AI has also produced a Case Study Master List of more than 60 environmental projects, including wetland and prairie restoration, naturalization, work with endangered species, pond revegetation,

pesticide reduction, composting, water conservation, water-quality management, and public outreach on golf courses.

The Master List provides contact names and phone numbers so that anyone interested in replicating or learning more about golf course environmental achievements has ready access to people who have already implemented outstanding projects.

More detailed case studies will be released later this year describing how environmental improvement projects were implemented on golf courses and provide cost and benefit analysis.

The case studies may be accessed on the AI web-site at www.audubonintl.org. Hard copies are available from Samantha Meagher at 518-767-9051, ext. 12.

Jean Mackay is the education director of AI, headquartered in Selkirk, N.Y.

Sugarloaf's steward

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Some of Truskowski's early successes included doubling Sugarloaf's recycling rate within 18 months and initiating environmental awareness as a component of Sugarloaf's employee training program.

"All new employees are required to attend a full-day training session with environmental awareness being part of that training," she said. "The minute you come on board at Sugarloaf you are made aware of the resort's commitment to the environment."

Sugarloaf has worked with colleges and universities to provide a setting where students can undertake environmental projects and internships. It has also become part of AI's Adopt-a-School program, taking students at nearby Kingfield and Stratton elementary schools under the resort's wing and helping the schools themselves become co-operative sanctuaries.

Truskowski became the naturalist speaker at Camp Lots' a Fun (a Carrabassett Valley-sponsored program) that merged with American Skiing Co.'s (Sugarloaf's parent firm) own summer camp. "On Monday mornings I introduce the theme for the week, say endangered species," she said. "The camp counselors reinforce the theme throughout the week through various activities."

Sugarloaf Golf Course's Integrated Pest Management, public outreach, overall environmental plan and water conservation programs are all fully certified with AI, Truskowski said.

"We've decreased our water usage 50 percent over the past five years," she explained, "through different irrigation patterns and really watching the weather. Many of the employees here are native Mainers and understand the weather patterns they may come up against."

All gardens at the golf course are grown and fertilized organically. Compost is incorporated into divot mix and top dressings. In fact, Sugarloaf recently received a resort-wide grant to begin diverting food waste from garbage bins into a recyclable material that can be used on the golf course.

Sugarloaf has also done a lot of work on erosion-control projects. "When we cut a new ski trail two summers ago," Truskowski recalled, "instead of going in with skidders and chain saws, we took a John Deere excavator and went from the top of the mountain down, chipping trees so the roots stayed in the ground to hold the soil. The chips created a wonderful mulch that basically kept the tree on the mountain, just in a different form. That area requires less snow to cover that trail. If we ever cut more ski trails, we'll use that technology again."

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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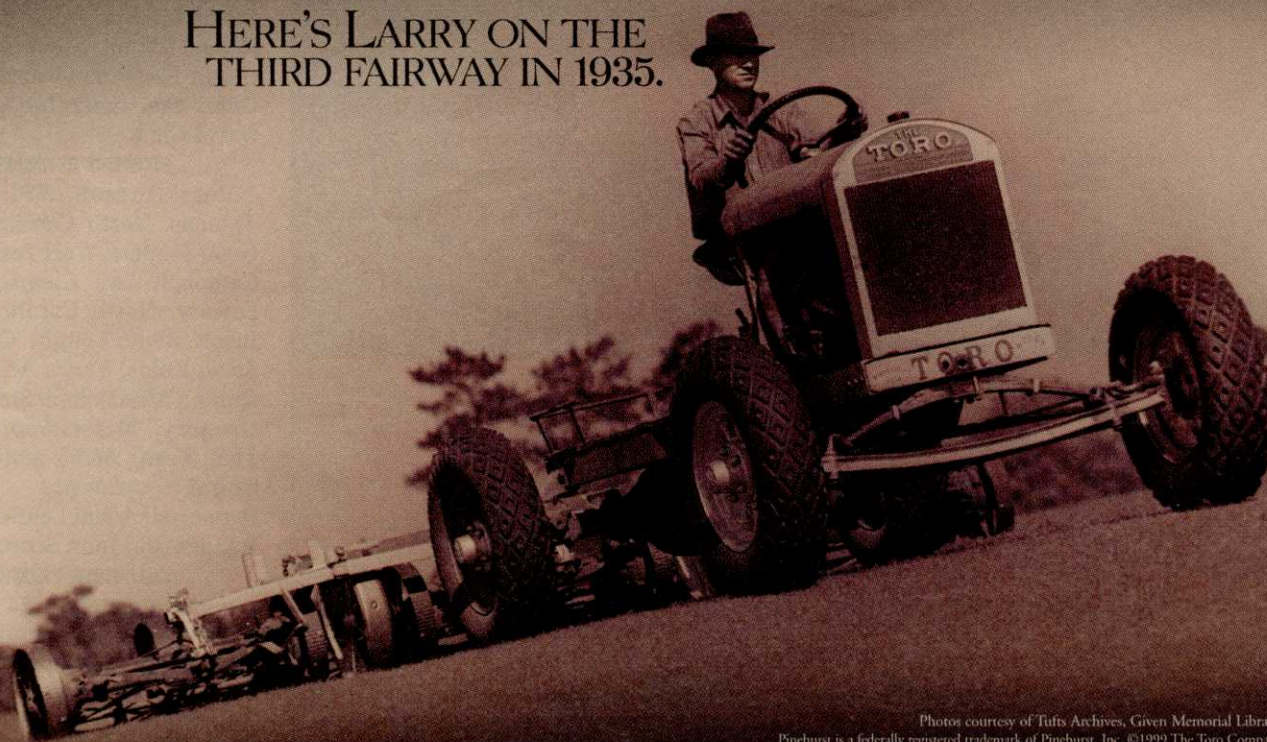
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