



WIN-WIN with Environmental Stewardship

By
Dan Mausolf
and Paul L. Scott

Environmental stewardship is a win-win practice for the golf industry and the environment. It helps the bottom line, reflects positively on the golf industry, and offers the public the chance to experience nature. At the University of Michigan's Radrick Farms Golf Course, environmental stewardship has been rewarding on so many levels. At its most basic definition, environmental stewardship is the responsible management of our natural resources. For us, it is much more. It represents an ethical value that defines our operational culture. Environmental stewardship helps us accomplish our mission of offering an exceptional golf experience at an exceptional value.

From the inception of Radrick

Farms, environmental considerations have been a priority. Frederick Matthaei, Sr., an alumnus and former regent, donated the property to the university in the 1960's. However, Matthaei was already implementing environmental stewardship practices in the 1930's when he purchased the property and converted it from a gravel mine into a farm. He practiced the innovative science of arboriculture while growing at least one of every tree indigenous to the state. University of Michigan President Harlan Hatcher suggested building a faculty golf course with then little-known golf course architect Pete Dye. Agreeing with the plan, Matthaei stipulated that the construction left as many trees undisturbed as possible. Radrick

Farms is now an 18-hole championship layout set on 275 acres of beautiful, rolling terrain.

The staff of Radrick Farms continues to embrace Mr. Matthaei's pioneering environmental stewardship vision. As part of our comprehensive approach to environmental stewardship, we have partnered with the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program, the Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Program, Groundwater Guardian Green Site program, and the Washtenaw County Community Partners for Clean Streams program. Through participation in these programs, Radrick Farms has garnered recognition from professionals within the golf industry, policy makers and citizens. These efforts help prove that a golf course can have a positive impact on the environment as well as participate in the university's goal of "going green, staying blue"

Some of these programs require the reporting of environmental data. Through careful planning and fiscal responsibility, we have been able to invest in technology that improves course conditions while gathering that data. Moisture meters, infrared thermometers, compaction meters, weather station data, and soil, water and tissue sampling give us the information necessary to make intelligent decisions. The accuracy of this data allows us to use best practices for chemical applications, water use and cultural regimens. Given the fluctuation of the economy and governmental regulations, superintendents need to be efficient with all of the resources they have at their disposal. Environmental stewardship programs can be a catalyst for identifying wasteful practices, making proper adjustments, and tracking the efforts that often result in better play-

ing conditions while saving time and money. These programs are a win-win for golf and the environment.

These programs also involve educational efforts that have resulted in unexpected benefits. To accurately and effectively promote environmental stewardship, the superintendent and the clubhouse manager have collaborated in many ways. The two parts of the operation must work together to promote and to educate the public about our program partners and their certification requirements. These efforts promote team work and appreciation between the two parts of the operation.

For example, our environmental stewardship guide was created to achieve full Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary certification. To create this guide, extensive collaboration was necessary. Photos were contributed from both ends of the operation. Computer and turf science knowledge was shared. The drafting and proofing process resulted in mutual respect and pride.

The golf industry is at the forefront of implementing and promoting environmental sustainability and stewardship in the burgeoning "green industry." Much research and unwavering dedication are required to reach the best solutions for any particular property. What may seem to be a daunting task is a rewarding experience that results in better course conditioning, sound financial decisions, satisfied customers, and ultimately a better place to live and work. Definitely a win-win. **GCI**

Dan Mausolf, superintendent and Paul L. Scott, clubhouse manager, are from Radrick Farms Golf Course, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.