

For every industry member who was pleased to see Golf Digest's extensive coverage imploring greater environmental stewardship in golf, there were just as many who rolled their eyes and said, "Welcome to the party."

Or worse, a surprising number of readers heaved their magazines across the room and wrote angry letters about politicizing their beloved monthly dosage of instruction. Yep, Golf Digest was flooded with hate mail for delving into "politics," even though a close reading reveals that the magazine devoted its coverage to golf's environmental impact and future outlook. (Go to GolfDigest.com/editorsblog to read some of the vitriolic stuff the magazine received.)

There's no question that, at times, the green movement gets out of hand. And that's coming from someone who fully subscribes to doing everything we can to conserve water, preserve wildlife, protect wetlands and, in general, leave the next generation with a world in better condition than we found it. But if you read the Golf Digest package or my story on the subject in this issue (page 43) and my interview with John Barton on the *Golfdom* Web site, you're probably mumbling something about having had enough of the lecturing.

The modern-day environmental movement relies way too heavily on guilt to prompt people to act instead of asking simple questions such as, "Wouldn't it just be wise to do the right thing, whether or not global warming is real?"

Too much guilt and fear mongering will drive people to rebel, and that's what we saw with Golf Digest's package — even though it was well done and equitable. It did not matter what was said; a segment of the American public just doesn't want to hear it anymore. That select demographic is older, crankier and getting more selfish by the day.

The bottom line is that architects and superintendents must embrace the green movement for their own survival, and many already have. It's coming to a golf course near you. You will be expected to make it part of your business plan. Or else, they're going to start a new club committee charged with watching every move

Get Smart — About the Environment

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



IT'S TIME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL OF CONSERVATION

you make and monitor every chemical you administer.

In other words, embrace the movement to cut them off at the pass and ensure your place in the golf business. Make this your issue and make yourself relevant or, even better, in complete control of the situation.

That might not appeal to your senses, but I know one thing from talking to superintendents: You are conservationists at heart. You probably won't be at the next Green Peace fundraiser or handing out leaflets for the National Resources Defense Council, but as trustees of these vastly complicated environmental settings known as golf courses, you know that conservation will carry the day.

You've known this for a long time, but the conservationist label is not nearly as sexy to golfers. Yet conservation is really at the heart of the environmental movement, only minus the fear and guilt.

If you haven't already, figure out ways to be proactive on the environmental front. Perhaps you can start writing about some of your safer modern practices in the club newsletter, or you can begin a blog documenting all of the wildlife at your course.

Whether it's for your own peace of mind and sense of job security or to quiet the cranky coots who want to see the world go down in flames because they only have a couple of years left, look for ways to preach the gospel of conservation. It's what makes sense both for the health of the game and the multi-billion-dollar industry surrounding it, but also for the common good of mankind.

Wait, there I go making you feel guilty. Ah, you know what I'm saying. End of sermon.

Shackelford can be reached at geoffshac@aol.com. Visit his Web site at www.geoffshackelford.com.