

NATIONAL NEWS

USGA Establishes 'Wildlife Links' Environmental Program

The United States Golf Association has established an environmental program, "Wildlife Links," that represents golf's first comprehensive investigation of the game's relationship with wildlife and its habitat.

Wildlife Links will fund research, management and education projects needed to provide the game of golf with state-of-the-art information on wildlife management issues. The USGA will contribute \$100,000 annually for the next three years to fund the program and has actively solicited additional funding from other golf organizations.

"Wildlife Links represents another innovative step we've taken to underscore the USGA's commitment to sound environmental stewardship," Reg Murphy, USGA president, said. "We invite other partners to join us in this effort so that the program will become a golf industry endeavor. As an example, we're delighted that the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and the Ladies Professional Golf Association have already committed funds in support of this research."

The program will be administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) in Washington, D.C. NFWF is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of natural resources. Among its goals are species habitat protection, environmental education, public policy development, natural resource management, habitat and ecosystem rehabilitation and restoration and leadership training for conservation professionals. NFWF leverages its challenge grants to secure private funds for conservation activities. To date, NFWF has under-

taken 1,205 projects in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and 17 countries, and leveraged over \$152 million for fish and wildlife protection.

An advisory panel of experts has been formed to oversee implementation of the USGA program. Dr. Peter Stangel, director of NFWF's Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Initiative, chairs the panel. Other members include Kirk Andries of the International Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies; Jim Felkel, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Dr. Mike Lennartz, U.S. Forest Service; Dr. Dan Petit, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Ron Dodson, Audubon Society of New York State, and Jim Snow, USGA Green Section.

The program's overall goal is to protect and enhance — through proper planning and management — the wildlife, fish and plant resources found on golf courses.

"The Wildlife Links Program will provide golf course architects and managers with research information they need to improve and create habitat for wildlife," Stangel said. "We are very pleased the USGA has made this important commitment to conservation."

Certain issues will receive research priority. They include determining how golf courses can be maintained as biologically productive sites for wildlife, providing solid recommendations that can be incorporated into long-term management strategies and educating golfers and the general public about these issues.

Examination of individual golf courses within the context of their surrounding landscape will remain a major focus of Wildlife Links. Obviously, an urban golf course may require different strategies than a rural one, while desert courses present a much different landscape for wildlife than wetlands venues. Regardless of

limatic orientation, however, the loss or fragmentation of wildlife habitat and its effect on wildlife, especially birds, will be a major factor in research projects.

The first Wildlife Links initiative will be the production of two new publications:

The first will target golf course superintendents and provide guidance about how to enhance golf course habitat for bird species.

The second publication will be dedicated to wetland issues, namely how to maintain creeks, streams and ponds as hospitable habitat.

Research proposals for these two publication projects are now being solicited. Any qualified researchers who want more information should contact Dr. Peter Stangel, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, 1120 Connecticut Avenue N.W., Suite 900, Washington, D.C., or call NFWF at (202) 857-5676.

GCSAA NATIONAL CONVENTION

FEB. 5-12, 1996

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