

Puget Sound Salmon-Safe Golf Course Program

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Objectives:

1. Conduct independent evaluations of area golf courses based on an adapted version of the Salmon-Safe Parks and Natural Areas Certification Guidelines to determine how management addresses water quality and habitat conservation.
2. Identify habitat restoration opportunities with participating golf courses and connect them with local resources to conduct on-the-ground improvements.
3. Develop an education and outreach campaign to build support for Salmon-Safe golf course management.
4. Test the opportunities for wide-scale implementation of Salmon-Safe golf course certification.
5. Demonstrate leadership within the golf industry in voluntary restoration and conservation efforts to recover native salmon and other fish and wildlife.

Start Date: 2007

Project Duration: one year

Total Funding: \$12,500

Over the past several years, Stewardship Partners has collaborated with the Oregon based Salmon-Safe Inc. to develop a Salmon-Safe certification and labeling program for Puget Sound area farmers and other landowners who adopt fish-friendly farming practices and participate in salmon habitat restoration projects. The project is proving to be successful, with over 40 farms certified to date, in-store retail campaigns with Seattle area grocers, extensive media coverage, and a variety of promotional materials produced for use by farmers in their direct marketing efforts.

As a follow-up to this successful program, we are considering additional opportunities to use the Salmon-Safe label and evaluation tool to advance environmental management practices of other types of landowners and businesses. For example, the Salmon-Safe program has been adapted for municipal park systems as well as corporate and university campuses.



Salmon-Safe guidelines represent an important opportunity because golf courses can have a large environmental impact from use of water, application of chemicals, conversion of wetlands, and alteration of stream and riparian habitat.

As a result of our promotion and outreach in Puget Sound, we have been approached by the Western Washington Golf Course Superintendents Association to explore opportunities to utilize the Salmon-Safe program as an evaluation tool to assess environmental performance and a public education tool to promote exemplary golf course management.

This represents an important opportunity because golf courses, many of which are located along productive stream systems, can have a large environmental impact from use of water, application of chemicals, conversion of wetlands, and alteration of stream and riparian habitat. Golf courses are increasingly being required to address these issues as several species of salmon, such as Puget Sound Chinook, have been listed under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Due to the increases in awareness of these issues among the public and golf course managers themselves, there have been some initial efforts within the industry to improve management practices. For example, the Northwest Golf Course Environmental Alliance is a newly formed effort to pro-actively demonstrate positive trends within the industry through their commitment to a set of Environmental Stewardship Guidelines.

Another industry effort is the Cooperative Sanctuary Program developed by the US Golf Association and Audubon International. Stewardship Partners, in conjunction with Salmon-Safe, Inc. will build on this momentum to establish a meaningful and regionally-based third-party certification program under the auspices of Salmon-Safe. We will adapt the Salmon-Safe Parks and Natural Areas Certification Guidelines to be more specific for golf course management and conduct



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independent pilot evaluations of three golf courses based on these guidelines. We will also help evaluate restoration opportunities and connect these golf courses with local organizations to conduct on-the-ground restoration work.

We have identified several golf courses which would be good candidates for piloting such a program based on their reputation for environmental performance, participation in habitat restoration along salmon bearing streams, and the interest of the managers. We will pilot the program with these initial candidates to determine the feasibility of more widescale implementation of a Salmon-Safe golf certification program.

Summary Points

- Stewardship Partners, in conjunction with Salmon-Safe, Inc. is establishing a meaningful and regionally-based third-party certification program under the auspices of Salmon-Safe for golf courses in the Pacific Northwest.

- Several golf courses have been identified which would be good candidates for piloting such a program based on their reputation for environmental performance, participation in habitat restoration along salmon bearing streams, and the interest of the managers.