



## Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program Certification Overview



*Uwharrie Vineyards, NC*

Because each ACSP property is distinct, we start with the Site Assessment and Environmental Plan to get to know the resources, issues, and opportunities on your site.

The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) is an education and certification program that helps organizations and businesses protect our environment while enhancing their bottom line. The “plan-do-check-act” approach of the ACSP mirrors that of other environmental management systems, but also includes certification as an incentive and reward for positive environmental actions and results. Achieving certification demonstrates an organization’s leadership, commitment, and high standards of environmental management.

### What’s involved?

An organization must develop and implement an environmental management plan and document its results to become certified. Environmental management practices in five key areas include:

- Site Assessment and Environmental Planning
- Wildlife and Habitat Management
- Water
- Resource Management
- Outreach and Education

Designation as a *Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary* is awarded upon meeting environmental management standards in all areas. Recertification is required every two years.

### Who can join?

Organizations and businesses of all sizes, budgets, locations, and characteristics are welcome to participate in this program. Potential members include, but are not limited to the following:

- Cemeteries
- Corporate Parks
- Community Colleges
- Churches
- Resorts
- Manufacturing Facilities
- Municipal and State Parks
- Retail Stores



ACSP members are often pleased to find that many of their current best management practices count toward certification. (Certified ACSP member Bandelier Trading Company, Bandelier National Monument, New Mexico)

## How long does it take?

Most organizations achieve certification within one to three years, depending on how quickly they plan, organize, implement, and document their environmental practices.

## What does it cost?

The annual registration fee for the ACSP is \$200 (\$250 international), which includes certification materials and review. There are no additional fees for certification.

## What is involved?

ACSP members receive a Certification Handbook to guide certification efforts and documentation. The member begins by completing a Site Assessment and Environmental Plan, provided in the handbook. This information helps the organization to take stock of current environmental management practices and plan improvements.

The member submits its Site Assessment and Environmental Plan to Audubon International and receives a Certification Status Report that offers suggestions to help it proceed toward certification. Staff is also available to offer assistance via phone and e-mail.

Once the Site Assessment and Environmental Plan is reviewed by Audubon International, the member implements its plan and documents its efforts and results in each environmental quality area.

### **Wildlife and Habitat Management**

Proper grounds maintenance and landscaping can help you conserve the unique natural heritage of your area, prevent pollution, and contribute to community environmental quality. The program takes a flexible approach to account for the great variety of land uses and property sizes enrolled in the program.

### **Water**

Water conservation encompasses the use of efficient technologies, proper equipment maintenance, conservation measures to maximize the efficient use of water. Best management practices protect surface and ground water quality.

### **Resource Management**

Resource management is a management strategy of doing more with less. The ACSP focuses on energy conservation, waste management, and integrated pest management to optimize the use of resources, reduce environmental impacts, and reduce costs.

### **Outreach and Education**

ACSP members get started by assembling a Resource Advisory Group to provide technical advice and volunteer assistance to help

## What do ACSP members say about certification?

"I am particularly excited about working with Audubon International because of its strength in dovetailing resource conservation with wildlife protection. The return on investment for some of our recycling and reuse procedures is extremely high. Supply and utility costs are decreased drastically."

- Shane Ortega, Environment Manager  
Bandelier Trading Company, NM

"Probably our biggest challenge is lack of manpower which is exactly why I wanted to enroll the cemetery in the ACSP. Experience has taught me that you can do more with less if you manage your property for wildlife."

- Neil Yarbrough, Superintendent of  
Public Works, City of Eufaula – Fairview  
Cemetery, Eufaula, AL

"The entire process of pursuing certification helped unite our membership behind a worthwhile endeavor. It seemed to uplift our spirit of community, which was beneficial in countless ways."

- Robert Haley, Audubon Committee  
Chair, Creek Course at Hammock  
Dunes, Palm Coast, FL

implement the environmental plan. The program includes a focus on educating and involving employees and patrons in good stewardship practices to build support for environmental management programs and ensure long term success.

## How does Audubon International verify that the member is meeting certification standards?

Written and photographic documentation is required to achieve certification. If required information is missing or management practices are not in place, Audubon International places a "pending" status on the certification request. This enables the member to provide the needed documentation or further develop its management strategies.

On-site verification by a qualified third party is required prior to certification. Recertification is required every two years to ensure that members continue to uphold certification standards. Members that do not submit the appropriate documentation or are no longer meeting program requirements are decertified.

## What are the benefits of certification as an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary?

- **Image and Reputation**– Proven environmental performance can help a business differentiate itself from others in a crowded market and add value by improving public relations and marketing opportunities that attract new customers.
- **Customer/Employee Satisfaction**- Enhancing the nature of your business can enrich customers' experience and employee attitudes.
- **Financial Performance**- An effective environmental management program can result in reduced insurance premiums, as well as reduced costs for energy, water, pesticides, fertilizers, equipment wear, and labor.
- **Worker Safety and Reduced Liability**- Best practices for chemical management reduce exposure and liability risks associated with storing, handling, and applying chemicals.
- **Improved Efficiency**- Proper environmental management reduces waste and promotes efficient operations.
- **Environmental Quality**- The environmental management practices required for certification help businesses to improve the quality of our land, water, and air, and to conserve natural resources for future generations.

# Certification Tips

## 1. Take the first step!

We are eager to begin working with you, and the sooner we have your Site Assessment and Environmental Plan, the sooner we can begin making recommendations that will help you get certified. Many of our members begin to complete the Site Assessment and Environmental Plan and find that they have not done some of the projects on the environmental checklist. They put off sending in the materials because they want to have more accomplished first. *Don't make that mistake!* You don't need to already be doing all of the management practices or projects prior to sending in your plan! The whole point of the Site Assessment and Environmental Plan is to help you develop a plan of action. We have information that can help you prioritize, organize, and maximize your efforts.

## 2. Delegate.

Members who are successful in gaining certification rarely go it alone. Identify people to whom you can delegate tasks—like filling out the Site Assessment and Environmental Plan for starters. How about an assistant, a student intern, or an enthusiastic patron? By delegating responsibilities, you are offering great on-the-job environmental training.

## 3. Get help and expert advice.

Identify local resource people and organizations and develop a Resource Advisory Group in the early stages of your ACSP involvement. Not only will this group help you with planning and implementing projects, they will share your enthusiasm and provide good support for your efforts. Resource people can provide technical advice as you implement specific projects (e.g., a local birder can help develop a wildlife inventory), volunteer time or labor (e.g., youth organizations can plant a garden), help with monitoring (e.g., local high school or college students can monitor water quality), and work on public, employee, and member relations (e.g., staff or patrons may have hidden talents, such as photography, writing, or display design).

## 4. Start monitoring.

To achieve certification, you'll need to submit a variety of documentation that shows your efforts and results. The way to do this is to keep track of various aspects of your environmental stewardship efforts. This includes recording various birds and mammals that you see and taking pictures so that our staff can see what you've done. Your Certification Handbook tells you just what types of monitoring and documentation you'll need.

Don't wait until you're about to submit a request for certification to gather this information. Start monitoring and taking photos. Take before and after photos of projects and pictures of people in action. When you are ready to submit your certification requests, you'll have what you need.

## 5. Don't Hesitate to Call Us

Audubon International staff are available to provide additional information, support, and guidance to help you implement environmental projects and achieve certification. Our staff is available weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (EST) via phone and e-mail to answer questions or provide direction.

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