

Golf and the Environment

Golf courses have long suffered from a reputation of being harmful to the environment. While this perception is not entirely unfounded, golf courses have made great strides in becoming more environmentally responsible in recent years. Audubon International is dedicated to helping golf courses protect the environment while at the same time preserving the natural heritage of the game of golf. By helping people enhance the valuable natural areas and wildlife habitats that golf courses provide, improve efficiency, and minimize potentially harmful impacts of golf course operations, the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) for Golf Courses serves as vital resource for golf courses. Learn more about golf's environmental issues and opportunities and take action today!

Why Golf and the Environment?

Golf's use of chemicals, water, and other resources to maintain pristine golfing conditions has long been criticized for threatening the quality of our environment. While these issues are a real concern, golf actually has a unique opportunity to protect and enhance our environment. By their very nature, golf courses provide significant natural areas that benefit people and wildlife in increasingly urbanized communities across North America and throughout the world. In recent years, through education and certification by the ACSP, golfers and non-golfers alike are taking a second look at the nature of the game. Golf courses offer numerous opportunities to not only provide pleasant places to play, but also to protect drinking water, improve the water quality of on-site and surrounding lakes, streams, and rivers, support a variety of plants and wildlife, and protect the environment for future generations.



Golfers share spaces with all types of amazing creatures!

What are Golf's Potential Environmental Impacts?

In the past, environmental issues on the golf course have been overlooked. These include:

- Pollution of ground water and surface water caused by the use of pesticides, fertilizers, and other contaminants
- Poor stream water quality due to eroding shorelines
- Withdrawal of large quantities of water for irrigation
- Degradation or loss of natural areas
- Health hazards from chemical handling and applications
- Negative impacts of chemical use on "non-target" wildlife
- Unsound turf management driven by increasing and unrealistic golfer expectations and demands

New golf developments may raise additional concerns, depending on their location and design:

- Loss and fragmentation of wildlife habitats
- Alteration or damage to wetlands
- Replacement of natural plant communities with intensively managed landscapes and non-native plants
- Increased conflicts with wildlife

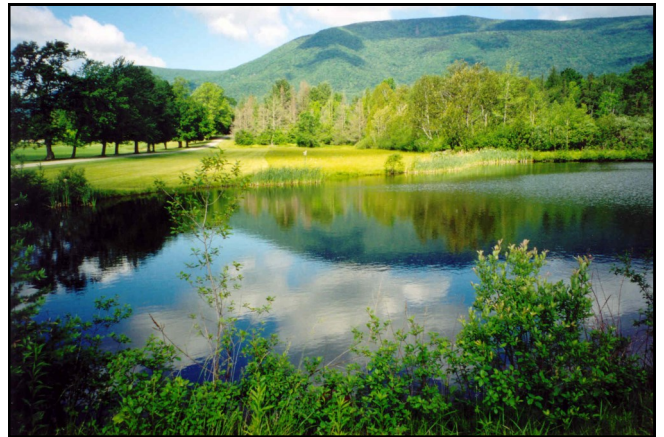
What are Golf's Environmental Opportunities?

With sound education and technical assistance from third-party environmental organizations like Audubon International, golf courses are uniquely positioned to offer a host of environmental benefits:

- Provide needed wildlife sanctuaries
- Preserve natural areas within urban environments
- Support plants and wildlife native to the area
- Protect water resources
- Filter stormwater runoff through golf course wetlands and turfgrass
- Rehabilitate degraded landscapes
- Promote physical and mental well being, reducing stress for more than 25 million U.S. golfers
- Improve air quality and moderate temperature
- Educate golfers and the general public about the *nature of the game* and promote environmentally-sound management

What are the Benefits of Improved Environmental Performance?

- **Image and Reputation:** Good environmental performance can help you differentiate your course from others in a crowded market and add value by improving public relations and marketing opportunities that attract new golfers or club members.
- **Customer Satisfaction:** The nature of your course can enrich golfers' experience of the game. Surveys have shown that golfers report that playing quality is maintained or even improved as a result of steps taken to manage a course in harmony with the natural environment.
- **Financial Performance:** An effective golf course environmental management program can result in reduced insurance premiums, as well as reduced costs for energy, water, fuel, pesticides, or fertilizers.
- **Worker Safety and Reduced Liability:** Best practices for chemical management reduce exposure and liability risks from storing, handling, and applying chemicals.
- **Improved Efficiency:** Sound environmental management cuts down on waste and promotes efficient operations.



More than 2,200 golf courses have registered in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program, sponsored in part by the USGA. The education and certification program helps golf courses protect the nature of the game.

Golfers Do?

Sit atop the environmental leaderboard by following the *Environmental Etiquette for Golfers*:

- Be kind to the course: repair ball marks and replace divots to help maintain playability.
- Walk, rather than use a cart, if health permits. Walking promotes physical fitness, healthy turf, and a clean environment.
- Look for consistent, true ball roll on greens, rather than speed. Lower mowing heights required for fast greens are at the root of many turf and environmental problems.
- Keep play on the course and stay out of natural areas. Respect designated environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife habitats within the course.
- Use trash and recycling receptacles and encourage others to do the same. If you see trash, don't pass it up...pick it up!
- Appreciate the nature of the game. Foster wildlife and natural habitats in non-play areas.
- Educate others about the benefits of environmentally responsible golf course management for the future of the game and the environment.
- Encourage your golf course be an active participant in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses



Become a driver for improved environmental performance at your golf course!