

Changing Public Perception of Golf Courses

Location: **Harrison, Tennessee**
Type of property: **Public, 18-hole
golf course**
Type of membership: **ACSP for Golf**
Member since: **2007**
Certified since: **2008**

Operated by The State of Tennessee's Department of Environment and Conservation, The Bear Trace at Harrison Bay State Park has always been uniquely conscious of its environmental impact. Located on state park property and surrounded by soaring pines and hardwoods, the course faces higher environmental expectations than most public golf courses. Joining ACSP for Golf Courses in 2007 was a natural expression of the course's commitment to nature.



The Bear Trace at Harrison Bay

The course has made many improvements in water conservation, water quality management, wildlife and habitat management, chemical use reduction and safety, and outreach and education since joining the program. The state park course has installed 45 bird nesting houses, created a large plant bed comprised of 218 plants native to Tennessee, and renovated the golf course's chemical storage facility. In addition, 40 acres of the course were naturalized to minimize maintenance. The formerly maintained turf grass area was changed from bentgrass to Champion Ultradwarf Bermuda grass—reducing the course's chemical use and budget from \$39,000 to \$8,000 annually. These improvements and others resulted in abundant positive public recognition and numerous awards for their efforts.

In 2009, the course received the Governor's Environmental Stewardship Award in the category of Parks and Recreation from The State of Tennessee based on their work in becoming ACSP certified. The award recognizes exemplary voluntary actions that improve or protect the environment and natural resources with projects not required by law or regulations. "We are pleased to honor these fine Tennesseans who have gone the extra mile to not only preserve and protect, but to teach others how to enhance the condition of our shared environment," said Environment and Conservation Commissioner Jim Fyke. The Bear Trace was the first golf course in the award's 23 year history to be recognized with this honor.

The course was featured in the USGA Green Section magazine's [July-August 2009 issue](#) for their work in presenting the environmental benefits of golf to golfers and guests. They also received the 2009 Golf Course Superintendents Association of America/ *Golf Digest* Environmental Leaders in Golf Award for their local chapter.

For additional outreach and education ideas, visit the [Audubon International Facebook page](#).

Paul L. Carter, Superintendent, said, "Being able to state that our golf course is a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary has allowed us to communicate differently with state and federal authorities. Our actions on the golf course and our outreach and education efforts within the community have changed the way people look at our golf course and the activities that we do here."