





aquifer, but it seems to be the same one that most other golf courses in the area use as a backup.”

In most years, courses in this low-lying region rely on runoff water from rains. The Golf Club at Audubon has 15 acres surface acres of retention ponds built into its 80 acres of maintained turf area. There’s plenty of capacity to handle most big rain events, including the eight inches New Orleans received during the first week of September (though the drought returned for the rest of that month). And now the city of New Orleans is in what Smith calls a “water collaborative group,” working with neighbors to establish water mitigation measures that will help channel heavy rains onto the course during floods. “I’ve always had the outlook that our golf course and its neighbors need to work hand in hand for the benefit of everybody. The course can benefit of the neighbors during the bad times, and the neighbors need to be patient with a golf course because we are helping them out.”

Audubon Park’s urban setting puts every environmental stewardship measure into starker relief than they might be in a suburban or rural area. Smith is careful to use as few pesticides as possible and employs an “as needed” philosophy with fertilizers. “We do soil tests to regulate exactly what it is we’re putting onto the greens. That goes for all chemicals. Since we’re part of Audubon International, we are always on the cautious side. With so many animals always in our background, with the zoo so

close by, we do not use a lot of insecticides on the golf course. We have a large avian population. We get a lot of ducks, blue heron. Some try to make their home here.”

As Smith and company continue to keep their lovely slice of Audubon Park in sync with its surroundings, improvements to the course move forward, as well. They’re relining new bunkers, for instance. They’re also dedicated to keeping their relationship with Audubon International strong, and their certification string intact—though Covid-19 certainly could have snapped it, Smith says.

“When I took over in 2019, I couldn’t find anything on Audubon International certification here in the office. It had been neglected

for at least two years. But they were very patient, and they helped me get back on track. They were very helpful in understanding the fact that I didn’t have the staff to meet all their requirements, and that we could’ve had to terminate part of our Signature Sanctuary partnership and just continue with the golf course. They said, ‘no, we’re going to work through this.’ And they’ve been helping us get to that point. We’re slowly getting there. They’re helping us with all the [certification] stuff while we’re training and retraining help to be able to take over and do other jobs. They’re great to work with.”

For more on The Golf Club at Audubon Park, visit <https://audubonnatureinstitute.org/golf>. To learn more about how your local golf course can gain recognition for your environmental efforts and learn how to expand your initiatives through Audubon International’s numerous environmental certifications, visit [www.auduboninternational.org](http://www.auduboninternational.org).

Audubon International, an environmentally focused non-profit organization, offers members numerous certifications and conservation initiatives to protect the areas where we live, work, and play. Their certifications are designed to increase environmental awareness, encourage sustainable environmental efforts, and educate both their members and their communities. 🌱

