



## Golf and the Environment



Get into the swing of caring for your golf course and the environment.

The Golf and the Environment Initiative is dedicated to the game of golf and the protection and enhancement of our natural environment. The PGA of America, United States Golf Association (USGA), and Audubon International have joined together to foster environmental awareness and action in cooperation with golfers and the golf industry. Your involvement can make our partnership a winning foursome. Learn more about golf's environmental issues and opportunities and take action today.

### Why golf and the environment?

Golf has a unique role to play in caring for our environment. By their very nature, golf courses provide significant natural areas that benefit people and wildlife in increasingly urbanized communities across North America. At the same time, golf's use of chemicals, water, and other resources to maintain pristine golfing conditions is often criticized for threatening the quality of our environment.

Now, more than ever before, 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 our lakes, streams, and rivers, support a variety of plants and wildlife, and protect our environment for future generations.

### What are golf's potential environmental impacts?

- 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



More than 2,300 golf courses have registered in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program, sponsored by the USGA. The education and certification program helps golf courses protect the nature of the game.

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?

- 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, 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.



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

## How can PGA Professionals become involved?

- Learn more. Familiarize yourself with golf's environmental issues and opportunities.
- Encourage golfers to get in the swing of caring for the golf course and the environment. Post the *Environmental Etiquette for Golfers* in your pro shop and remind golfers to follow it.
- Serve as a liaison between the golf course superintendent and golfers—to better explain and support the environmental actions being taken on the golf course.
- Initiate or support efforts to improve environmental performance on your course and throughout the golf industry. Enroll your course in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, a proven tool for improving environmental performance.
- Contribute to the Golf and Environment Initiative, sponsored by the PGA, USGA, and Audubon International. Your contribution helps to educate PGA professionals, golfers, superintendents, and the general public and improve golf's environmental game.

## What can 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 to be an active participant in environmental programs for golf courses, such as those offered by Audubon International.

To find out more about the  
Golf and Environment  
Initiative visit  
[www.golfandenvironment.org](http://www.golfandenvironment.org),