



Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses Certification Overview



Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary certification is a high honor awarded to golf courses that demonstrate their commitment to the environment. The Ryder Golf Course at Fort Bragg, NC, proudly unveiled its certification with a new sign.

Audubon International awards certification to recognize golf courses that protect the environment, conserve natural resources, and provide wildlife habitats. Achieving certification demonstrates a course's leadership, commitment, and high standards of environmental management.

How does a golf course achieve certification?

A golf course must develop and implement an environmental management plan and document its results to become certified. Environmental management practices in six key areas are included:

- Environmental Planning
- Wildlife and Habitat Management
- Chemical Use Reduction and Safety
- Water Conservation
- Water Quality Management
- Outreach and Education

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

Who can achieve certification?

Golf courses enrolled in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses (ACSP) may apply for certification. There are no restrictions on the types of golf courses that are eligible— nine-hole par 3 courses, courses with tight layouts, municipal courses, resort courses, tournament courses, and country clubs are encouraged to become certified.

How long does it take?

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



ACSP members are often pleased to find that many of their current best management practices count toward certification.

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 golf course begins by completing a Site Assessment and Environmental Plan, provided in the handbook. This information helps golf course personnel to take stock of current environmental management practices and plan improvements.

The course 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 via phone and e-mail to assist golf course personnel.

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

Wildlife and Habitat Management

The golf course enhances existing natural habitats and landscaping to promote wildlife and biodiversity conservation. Flexibility is essential to account for each course's location, size, and layout, as well as special wildlife species and habitat considerations.

Chemical Use Reduction and Safety

The golf course implements best management practices at the maintenance facility and on the course to ensure that chemicals are stored, handled, applied, and disposed of safely. In addition, maintenance staff employ integrated pest management strategies to track and target specific pests and minimize chemical use.

Water Conservation

The golf course employs conservation management strategies to maximize the efficient use of water. These include maximizing irrigation efficiency; determining proper irrigation; reducing irrigated acreage where possible; recapturing and re-using water; and incorporating drought-tolerant plant species.

Water Quality Management

The golf course implements Best Management Practices to eliminate potential nutrient or pesticide contamination of water sources. The course also employs environmentally-sensitive management practices in ponds, streams, and wetlands; proper equipment and chemical storage and handling; and water quality monitoring to verify results.

What do ACSP members say about certification?

"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

"Having completed the process of becoming certified, I am thrilled to report that we are already seeing dramatic changes and improvements throughout the golf course."

- Elizabeth Gilmour, Landscape Superintendent, Frenchman's Reserve, Palm Beach Gardens, FL

"The program has been instrumental in expanding our awareness and participation in the care of our environment, while at the same time we continue to provide standards of excellence in golf course conditioning for our members."

- John Paul McMillan, Horticulturist, Wilmington Country Club, Wilmington, DE

Outreach and Education

Golf course personnel build support for their environmental management program through a variety of communication, education, and outreach activities. They also form a Resource Advisory Group of people who provide technical advice and volunteer assistance to help implement the environmental plan. This helps to ensure the long-term success of environmental management practices, especially if staff assignments change.

How does Audubon International verify that the golf course 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 course to provide the needed documentation or further develop its management strategies.

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

Contact Us & Join Today

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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 via phone and e-mail to answer questions or provide direction.

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