

The Green Machine

The environment is right for environmentalism.

By **Jamie J. Gooch**

What is your course's carbon footprint? What are you doing to offset it? If a golfer, bureaucrat or environmental activist asked you those questions today, what would you tell them? Golf course superintendents have long been environmental stewards, and there's no better time to trumpet that than now.

The Live Earth series of concerts, which were designed to bring attention to climate change, were seen by more than 2 billion people. Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth" documentary had a box office gross of more than \$24 million since its release last year. Global warming is all over the media and the environment is expected to be a big part of the 2008 elections. It's obvious that the environment is climbing toward the top of the global agenda.

Golf courses could be seen as an ally supporting the environment or an enemy of a healthy environment by those not in the industry. It's the industry's responsibility to not only be good stewards of the land, but to communicate their environmental efforts to their communities.

There are a number of ways to get involved.

The Environmental Institute for Golf (www.eifg.org) is the philanthropic arm of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. It funds more than \$1 million annually in environmental programs. Its mission is to "strengthen the compatibility of the game of golf with our natural environment."

It is currently funding the Golf Course Environmental Profile project to collect environmental information on courses. It

is also compiling best management practices and other related information in its online EDGE database. Ongoing environmental research and education is also funded by The Institute.

John Deere recently lent its support to the Institute for Golf by donating \$100,000 to it. Gregg Breningmeyer, John Deere Golf & Turf One Source director of sales and marketing, is representing John Deere on The Institute's Advisory Council. The Advisory Council provides guidance to The Institute's board of trustees in the areas of outreach, fundraising and strategic planning.

"John Deere is committed to investing in the future of golf and ensuring its compatibility with the environment," Breningmeyer says. "We are pleased with the research and educational advancements The Institute is providing, and we wanted to get more involved."

Another organization superintendents can join to help protect the environment is Golf & the Environment (www.golfandenvironment.org). It's a partnership of the United States Golf Association, The PGA of America, and Audubon International.

For a \$200 annual fee, courses can join Golf & the Environment's Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) for Golf, an education and certification program that helps golf courses protect the environment and preserve the natural heritage of the game of golf. The program provides a site assessment and environmental planning form to guide you through environmental planning, wildlife and habitat management, chemical use reduction and safety, water conservation and outreach. By implementing and documenting environmental management practices, a course can become certified. ■



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