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Presumpscot River Watch

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Final Report to the Casco Bay Estuary Project
Environmental Stewardship for Golf Courses in the Casco Bay Watershed
Forrest Bell
Presumpscot River Watch
February 14, 2005

Introduction

In July of 2003, Presumpscot River Watch received a \$5,000 grant from the Casco Bay Estuary Project (CBEP) to assist the 21 golf courses located within the Casco Bay watershed with environmental stewardship efforts. This grant was later amended to the amount of \$5,999. The project was implemented in three tasks: 1) Coordination for and promotion for a two-day conference for natural resource professionals and golf course superintendents; and 2) One-on-one meetings and technical assistance visits with Casco Bay golf courses to assess needs and promote the Audubon program; and 3) Initial environmental planning with Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program registered courses.

Project Tasks/Accomplishments

- 1) *Coordination of and promotion for a two-day golf course environmental stewardship conference in the fall of 2003 for natural resource professionals (day 1) and golf course superintendents (day 2).*

Overview: Forrest Bell, PRW Executive Director, was a lead coordinator for this conference and was assisted by a committee consisting of Bill Laflamme, Maine DEP Karen Young, CBEP, Joellen Zeh Audubon International, and the Maine Golf Course Superintendents Association. More than 100 people attended the workshops—42 environmental managers/professionals attended the first workshop on and 60 golf course superintendents and golf industry professionals attended the second day. The first workshop, held on October 21, 2003, was led by the staff at Audubon International and included a tour of the only Audubon certified sanctuary golf course in Maine—Portland Country Club (see two photos at right). The second workshop, held on October 22, 2003, included 8 presentations by environmental professionals and educators focusing on the environmental management categories that are the focus areas for becoming a certified Audubon sanctuary. Both conferences/workshops were considered very successful and informative according to evaluations submitted to the organizing committee. According to the evaluations, the highlight of the first workshop was the informative tour and the highlight of the second workshop was the entertaining and enlightening presentation by Frank Rossi of Cornell University. All attendees of the first workshop were asked if they would be interested to volunteer their services to help Maine courses obtain Audubon certification and more than 20 signed on. All superintendents were asked if they were interested in becoming certified and more than a dozen signed up requesting follow-up assistance. Note: Maine DEP provided support funding for these workshops including food and beverage for the event and travel for some speakers.



- 2) *Promotion of the conference and Audubon International program to Casco Bay golf courses*

Forrest Bell developed and Maine DEP mailed a colorful promotional brochure to all of the golf courses that are involved in the Maine Golf Course Superintendents Association. Forrest Bell provided additional outreach to Casco Bay watershed golf courses by 1) mailing the brochure to all 22 courses in the watershed; 2) emailing notices to all of the golf course superintendents in the Casco Bay watershed; and 3) follow-up visits with most of the golf courses in the watershed to promote the conference and the Audubon International Program. Follow up visits were not made to the three courses that are more than a 45 minute drive from Portland. The success of the follow up work was evident at the meeting since more than half of the attendees at the second workshop were from courses or businesses within the Casco Bay Watershed. A packet of information relating to environmental

management on Maine golf courses was provided to all attendees of the workshop and a follow up mailing was conducted by Bill Laflamme, Maine DEP.

3) *One-on-one meetings with Casco Bay watershed course superintendents to provide technical assistance on the six AI standard management practices.*

Project staff conducted eight technical visits to Casco Bay watershed courses and gave two formal presentations to larger groups which included Casco Bay watershed course superintendents and owners. Most of the technical assistance visits focused on courses that expressed interest or registered in the Audubon sanctuary program. The gold standard for golf course stewardship in the Casco Bay watershed has been set by Portland Country Club (see photo, below, left). Project staff toured the course with PCC staff to view all of the projects and measures implemented through the oversight of the Audubon program. PRW encouraged superintendents to follow the practices of the Portland County Club.



Portland Country Club, Falmouth



Gorham Country Club, Gorham



Sable Oaks Golf Club, S. Portland

Conclusions/Next Steps

Through this program, project staff was able to tour several watershed courses to view and document current environmental practices. One of the most consistent problems noted is the lack of vegetative buffers along river and streams that are located on or adjacent to courses (see example, above center). Another problem is the lack of proper treatment areas for chemical handling and equipment cleaning that can run-off into surface and groundwater resources. Grant projects that incorporated cost-sharing with courses to focus on these two management practices would be highly recommended. Also, as with many environmental management situations, several management options can be incorporated into golf courses with little time or expense. An example of this is installing signs demanding that golfers “keep out” of environmentally sensitive areas (see photo, above right).

Through this project, three Casco Bay watershed courses (Sable Oaks, South Portland; Val Halla, Cumberland; Sunrise Golf Links, Westbrook) have enrolled in the Audubon Program. Three others expressed interest but have yet to follow-through. The environmental planning effort required by the Audubon program is complex and it would be ideal to seek funds to assist the courses in this 1-3 year process.

Final Budget Summary

Task 1 (conference & planning):	\$2,850.00
Task 2 (outreach to C Bay courses):	\$1,650.00
Task 3 (technical assistance to courses):	\$1,149.00
Task 4 (documentation and reporting):	\$ 350.00
CBEP Total	\$5,999.00
Estimated Match	\$4,250.00 (superintendents, MDEP, PRW)
Project Total	\$10,249.00