

# Green Practices for Clubs

## Start Small to Grow Large Yields

**THE OVERARCHING ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONCERNS TO MINIMIZE NATURAL RESOURCE USE THROUGH 'GREEN' PRACTICES HAVE BEGUN TO PROMPT THE PRIVATE CLUB WORLD TO EXAMINE OUR OWN WAYS AND MEANS OF DAILY OPERATION.**

The number and sheer geographical size of clubs and golf courses across the country also impart certain accountability on clubs as socially responsible businesses to implement the highest practical number of green practices.

A close evaluation of your club's practices and assets is not only the responsible thing to do but can yield results in operational efficiencies and resultant budgetary savings. These savings can come from changes in overall club policies or inspection and evaluation of specific club capital assets.

Certain easily achieved operational issues have been known for several years. The most common is the reduction of hard copy paper for the volume of daily communications with staff and members. Ever increasing use of email blasts and interactive websites effectively foster communication to the majority of techno savvy members while eliminating paper, labor and delivery costs.

Another resource saver is to retrofit compact fluorescent lamps (CFL). This can result in up to 40 percent energy savings and lower replacement and labor costs because of the lights' long service life. Some may object to the cooler color cast off by the CFL and they may initially be limited to non-member areas, notably storage, staff and mechanical spaces.

However, think of how many times you have walked through your club with all of the lights blazing and absolutely no income generating event or activity occurring in the member areas. Switching to CFLs reduces energy use while still maintaining the right welcoming atmosphere. Try combining motion detection switches with the CFL lamps for ever-greater savings.

More substantial changes in club practices often involve capital investment to either correct known environmental violations or to replace aging equipment and improve long term operational efficiencies.

The first example is unfortunately a common issue at an indeterminate but certainly significant number of clubs throughout the country – that of the non-conforming golf course equipment wash station.

The Environmental Protection Agency considers golf course equipment wash water a source of industrial waste and is subject to the Clean Water Act restrictions, if the water were to flow into a drainage system or nearby body of water. This is because of the high nitrogen and phosphorus content from course fertilizers contained in the grass clippings.

Many clubs acknowledge their violations but have deferred the installation of an approved wash station because of the significant expenditure, especially



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in the current capital constraints at many clubs. However, the EPA imposes significant fines upon known violations.

Our work includes the inspection of our clients' wash stations for conformance. We have inspected wash stations as simple as a concrete pad, a hose and a drain running into an adjacent field, or more importantly, an adjacent stream that in one case led to a protected wetland. We would therefore urge all golf clubs to establish the installation of an EPA conforming wash station as Job One.

A related contamination issue is underground storage tanks or UST. The EPA introduced regulations for tanks removal in 1998 although many remain in unknown condition.

These older fuel tanks, evidenced by the protruding vertical fill pipe, are typically of single wall construction and subject to metal deterioration. Over time, leaking tanks contaminate the surrounding soils and water table.

Yet again clubs may look the other way to defer the removal expenses for the tank and any contaminated

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soils. If your club has a UST, the club should at a minimum document the remaining amount of fuel to gauge leakage and conduct soil tests to determine the amount of soil contamination.

Our two examples of common environmental violations require immediate remediation. Other methods to 'green' your club have a longer time frame and planning. They are also a bit more technical and involve the often-ignored mechanical systems, notably the air conditioning and the use of energy management systems.

Small to medium capacity air conditioning units have a SEER (Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio) rating. The rating is an expression of the operational efficiencies of a given unit. The current federal minimum for new equipment is 13 SEER and the current extreme high is 23 SEER.

In these capital limited years, clubs may be nursing along limping units with a low SEER rating. The same efficiency principals apply to aging boilers, chillers and air handlers. Collectively, these inefficient units drain more than energy – they drain your limited operating and maintenance budgets.

Proactive clubs replace these units to minimize maintenance costs and more importantly, reduce long-term energy use and expenditures. The energy management system coordinates the operation of the numerous

mechanical systems in larger, more recent clubhouses. This complex system electronically monitors the operation and energy use of each piece of mechanical equipment – from air conditioners, exhaust fans, to water heaters throughout the clubhouse.

Daily and often hourly adjustments to the specific operation of the equipment results in the best and highest use of the equipment, thereby minimizing energy use and maximizing the service life of each of these capital intensive pieces of equipment.

This overview of 'green' practices illustrates a few simple principles: Start small with new resource smart policies that are easy to implement. Solve any immediate environmental violations that could cost the club significant amounts because of fines and remediation costs, and finally grow into the long term issues of new mechanical equipment technologies to maximize operational efficiencies. **BR**

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