

National Park Service  
2011 Environmental Achievement Awards

**Winner**

**Golf Course Specialists, Inc., Concessioner**  
**National Mall & Memorial Parks; National Capital Parks East; Rock Creek Park**  
*Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Certification for Three Urban Golf Courses*

Golf Course Specialists, Inc. (GCS) is a concessioner responsible for the operation of urban golf courses at three National Capital Region (NCR) parks: National Mall & Memorial Parks, National Capital Parks East; and Rock Creek Park.

In the last few years, GCS has undertaken a process to achieve Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) certification for the three NCR golf courses. This cross-facility effort culminated in the ACSP certification of all three golf courses in FY 2010.

While working toward this certification, GCS realized the additional benefit of refining its environmental management practices resulting in reduction in chemical use, reduction in water use, reduction in green house gas emissions, and increased use of alternative non-synthetic chemicals. GCS also took a holistic approach to Integrated Pest Management and land management practices in cooperation with the parks. GCS's efforts achieved the following results:

- Created and enhanced native habitat areas to protect and sustain wildlife and plant species over a combined 40 acres at the three golf courses, representing approximately 7% of the total area managed by GCS. These habitats, which are designated as "no mow" areas, range in size from one quarter to three acres in size and are located throughout the properties, including around putting greens, fairways, and tees.
- Employed new and expanded chemical, cultural, and water management practices in FY 2010 to maintain healthy turf grass in the combined 119 acres of manicured greens, fairways, and tees. These practices have reduced the amount of chemicals and water used at the three golf courses.
- Convened a Resource Advisory Group at each golf course to help execute the ACSP certification-related initiatives. The group is comprised of GCS staff from different facets of its operations, members of the community, and NPS staff.
- Implemented an ISO14001:2004-based Environmental Management System to enhance GCS's environmental management program with a focus on monitoring, measuring and continually seeking opportunities to minimize the environmental impact of its operations.

These accomplishments exemplify GCS's commitment to exceed environmental compliance requirements and demonstrate its role as a responsible steward of parklands to visitors, neighboring communities, and the NPS. With both short- and long-term positive impacts, GCS's environmental stewardship in golf course operations should serve as a model for other golf course operations within the National Park Service.