



Best Management Practices for New York State Golf Courses

What is a BMP?

BMPs are methods or techniques found to be the most effective and practical means of achieving an objective, such as preventing water pollution or reducing pesticide usage. Many BMPs reduce stormwater volume, peak flow, and nonpoint source pollution through evapotranspiration, infiltration, detention, filtering, as well as biological and chemical actions. This new guidance provides information for using BMPs to prevent or minimize the effects of golf course management on surface and groundwater to insure and enhance public health and environmental quality. Pollution prevention is easier, less expensive, and more effective than addressing problems “downstream”. Essentially, BMPs are a sustainable approach to providing environmental, economic and social benefits to golf and society.

Why are BMPs important to the golf industry?

Golf courses rely on a healthy environment that includes water and wildlife. It is of paramount importance to enhance and protect water quality. A significant body of research exists that indicates successful implementation of BMPs virtually eliminates the golf course risk to water quality. In fact, several studies have shown that implementing BMPs enhances water quality on its journey on and through the golf course property.

Additional incentives for New York golf courses to implement BMPs include the following:

- potential for more efficiently allocating resources by identifying management zones
- cost savings associated with applying less fertilizer and pesticide
- improved community relations
- recognition by club members and the community at large as environmental stewards

Through a cooperative approach between the golf industry and friends and neighbors outside the industry, practices have been developed that benefit all parties.

When should you be aware of BMPs?

BMPs provide a science-based approach to protecting water quality from potential risks. Whether managing an existing course, renovating an existing course or constructing a new course, BMPs can be designed, installed and implemented. For example, golf course renovation and design projects can incorporate landscape BMPs such as vegetated swales, properly sited maintenance and storage facilities and efficiently designed irrigation systems. Specifically, during a renovation or grow-in period, BMPs protect water quality while the site is most vulnerable to soil erosion. For existing courses, the day-to-day management decisions on when, how much and how to apply nutrients provides many additional opportunities to apply BMPs that preserves and protects water quality.

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How to align golf course management with BMPs

Successful implementation of BMPs begins with understanding a few basic environmental concepts associated with land management and water. Using these concepts, a thorough site-specific understanding of vulnerable areas can focus BMP implementation in every stage of golf course design, construction, renovation, and maintenance.

BMPs for irrigation and nutrient management and the role of turf density, integrated pest management (IPM) and pesticide management will prevent runoff, leaching, and drift. Golf course managers must understand how much water is needed and when to apply it; how to select fertilizers and pesticides; and when, how, and where these compounds should and should not be applied. In addition, IPM principles provide alternatives to applying pesticides, as well as justification for using pesticides when necessary. Finally, maintenance facilities should also be properly managed in order to prevent point source release of chemicals that can reach ground or surface waters.