

Slattery, whose course also participates in the New York Environmental Leaders program, says most templates — GC-SAA's included — have similar philosophies at their core despite taking different approaches. "What all programs have in common can be boiled down to establishing baselines, to having a plan in place to try to gradually lower those baselines, and then being active in education and outreach to spread the message," he says.

In the following pages, *GCM* takes a closer look at a handful of superintendents who, like Slattery, are all in on spreading the BMPs message via their actions on the golf course.

**Kurt Noonan, CGCS
Juniper Golf Club
Redmond, Ore.**

Soil testing is among the top items on the agenda for Kurt Noonan, CGCS — and a key agronomic-fueled BMP initiative. "One thing I learned over time is how important soil tests are. If you feed the soil, it'll feed the plant," Noonan says.

BMP-driven practices also serve as a conduit for community outreach. Local junior high students literally build their environmental skills on the course through an after-school program Noonan initiated in which students visit Juniper to construct bluebird boxes for the property. These occasions are an opportunity for Noonan, a 26-year GCSAA member, to enlighten the young audience on some of the environmentally minded practices he employs at his facility.

"Our golf course is an outdoor classroom. Before they leave our facility, we hope it has given them a different perspective on something such as water," Noonan says. "We let them know how we mitigate it, how it goes back into the aquifer. If they go home and don't take as long of a shower as they usually do or don't run the water while they are brushing their teeth, it's a big benefit for everybody."

The present is much different from the past in terms of how Noonan views his work space. Part of the proof is that Juniper is now a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary (GCSAA's BMP template recommends use of environmental programs such as Audubon's). "When I was younger, I didn't know if I could handle all of the restrictions that golf courses are under now," Noonan says. "BMPs have become part of a routine — part of who you are. Really, it's



Above: Kurt Noonan, CGCS at Juniper GC in Redmond, Ore., invites community members, particularly students, to the golf course so they can learn about the environmentally friendly practices that are part of everyday management at the facility.

Right: Junior high students help assemble birdhouses at Juniper GC with an assist from Noonan. Photos courtesy of Kurt Noonan



about placing restrictions on yourself. It's not hard. The bottom line is that it's the right thing to do."

Noonan's community outreach touches many. He pitched a proposal to management to host a 5K run, and it was a runaway hit. Two community runs have been held, and nearly 300 high schoolers participated in two cross-country races on the property. "Some people who didn't even know where Juniper was do now, and now they know something about us and what we do," Noonan says.

Ed Harris, whose child has participated in the birdhouse-building activities at Juniper, is among those familiar with Noonan's advocacy skills. "We tend to be isolated out here, but the course has proven it is more than just golf," Harris says. "It is a big piece of this community, and he (Noonan) is a massive contributor to our community."

**Andy Jorgensen, CGCS
On Top of the World
Ocala, Fla.**

A letter from a member remains a keepsake for Andy Jorgensen.

"In correspondence with our membership, I had outlined our aerification sched-

ule, and let them know what we were doing would affect us for years to come. For one of our members, it was like a lightbulb came on," says Jorgensen, a certified superintendent and 17-year GCSAA member who oversees 54 holes at On Top of the World. "He wrote to me and said he had disagreed with me on aerification until he read that sentence — that it wasn't a temporary fix but was for our long-term survival. The message got across."

Jorgensen is convinced that outreach — whether through targeting club members at On Top of the World or outsiders who may have questions about golf courses and their place in the environment — is vital, and BMPs allow him to state his case anytime, anywhere.

"We preach what we do every chance we get — that what we do as superintendents is science-based and not just something that somebody came up with," says Jorgensen, who also serves as a GCSAA Grassroots Ambassador. "Here, we have been doing BMPs



Above: Maintained turf has been replaced by wildflowers at On Top of the World at Ocala, Fla., where Andy Jorgensen, CGCS, is a staunch proponent of BMPs. Photo courtesy of Andy Jorgensen



Right: Bill Bieck, CGCS and golf course operations manager (center) at Heritage Hills GC in McCook, Neb., led the campaign to have the course designated a Groundwater Guardian Green Site. Photo courtesy of Bill Bieck

for a long time. Having the documentation to back up what we do helps us plead our case to legislators and policymakers.”

It has proved extremely effective. The Florida GCSA’s BMP manual, which includes a certification program, has kept the state’s superintendents out in front of potential obstacles. Superintendents have encountered more than 90 ordinances in Florida, but they have received exemptions (such as being exempt from blackout periods and restrictions on types of fertilizers that can be used) as well as recognition, thanks to their professional land-management efforts and reliance on the BMP resource.

Jorgensen proudly points out that transitioning to solar power at his maintenance building has saved thousands of dollars. On Top of the World participates in an incentive program as a customer of Duke Energy Florida, which helps the facility use private solar.

There are numerous other examples of BMPs at work at On Top of the World. Jorgensen has abandoned traditional overseeding with perennial ryegrass each fall, opting instead for pigments to color the turf and liquid fertilizers to promote growth. “It has reduced our annual water usage by 21 million gallons per year,” he says. In addition, he has eliminated 3 acres of maintained

turf that were out of play and replaced them with wildflowers. “We also partnered with the local beekeeping club, and they have a beehive here on property,” he says.

In the opinion of Mark Kann of the University of Florida’s Plant Science Research and Education Unit, On Top of the World is a perfect example of a BMP success story. “My big thing is being proactive,” says Kann, a 17-year GCSAA member. “Andy is one of the most involved people there is. When he goes to county commission meetings, he doesn’t go to them just for himself. He goes for the industry. He’s protecting jobs for a lot of people, not just his.”

Bill Bieck, CGCS Heritage Hills Golf Course McCook, Neb.

When it comes to BMPs, Bill Bieck, CGCS, is ahead of the curve.

Bieck, the golf course operations manager at Heritage Hills Golf Course and a 41-year GCSAA member, has long been proactive to ensure his facility is compliant in every possible capacity. “In the court of law, the old adage is you’re innocent until proven guilty. However, in the court of public perception, it often seems that our industry is guilty until proven innocent,” Bieck says. “BMPs allow us to put out a tool to share with those outside of our industry that we’re doing the right things before we are called into the courtroom.”

Water is the most sensitive issue at Heritage Hills, Bieck says, in part because the golf course sits atop the Ogallala Aquifer and is surrounded by several acres of irri-

gated farmland. “We disperse water more discreetly, uniformly,” Bieck says.

Outsiders have noticed his achievements. For 10 years, Heritage Hills has held the distinction of being a Groundwater Guardian Green Site in recognition of its environmental stewardship with regard to groundwater. That program, like other environmental management programs, is based upon BMPs similar to those within GCSAA’s template.

“Bill has long advocated for groundwater protection, and practices what he preaches,” says Jennifer Wemhoff, the program communications manager for The Groundwater Foundation, which oversees the Groundwater Guardian Green Site program. “Having partners like Bill in the golf industry is an important component in making us all part of the solution to maintain clean, sustainable groundwater. Golf courses often get a bad rap. The Green Site designation recognizes the good things superintendents are doing to negate impacts on the environment.”

Bieck writes articles and speaks about groundwater protection. He views it as a superintendent’s obligation. “It’s really important to network with entities outside of our comfort zone. It’s really important that we know them and they know us,” Bieck says. “I hope I’ve educated them to a certain degree that we take this seriously and try to do the right things. Our challenges with BMPs may be different here than in Florida, but our end goals are the same.”

Nebraska is targeting 2018 to have its BMPs in place. “I think the (GCSAA) template is great, and am confident most people