

# Sanibel Golf Course Fertilizer and Lake Management Recommendations Annual Report Card



July 2012



This report was specifically prepared for:

**Beachview Golf and Tennis Club**

## Introduction

Stormwater runoff from urban landscapes and golf courses are a major source of nutrients contributing to algae blooms and water quality impairments in Florida. Poor water quality not only impacts wildlife habitat and the quality of life for island residents, but it can directly impact our local economy by reducing property values and the overall experience of visitors to our island. As a result, protecting Sanibel's water quality is of paramount concern to the City of Sanibel.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) is the state agency responsible for protecting Florida's waters. Waters that do not meet the state's water quality standards are deemed "impaired" under the Florida Impaired Waters Rule (Ch. 62-303, F.A.C.). To address these impairments, the FDEP is developing Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) for each waterbody that does not meet minimum water quality standards. The TMDL is the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can assimilate on a daily basis without causing an imbalance in the natural flora and fauna. As part of the TMDL process, all local governments with impaired waterbodies within their jurisdiction will be required to participate in a Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) process and will be required to address pollutant sources that are contributing to the impairment. It is anticipated that over the next few years a TMDL will be developed for the Sanibel River and the coastal waters surrounding Sanibel Island.

The City of Sanibel has taken several measures to improve water quality throughout the island. These measures include acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands, mangrove protection, native plant protection and sod limitations, beach and dune protection, conversion from septic to central sewer, responsible development through reductions in impervious surfaces and onsite stormwater management, implementation of the National Pollutant and Discharge Eliminations System Program, island-wide water quality monitoring, adoption of an urban fertilizer ordinance, and nutrient and lake management recommendations for golf courses. While the City has taken a very proactive role in improving water quality, the Sanibel River and many residential and golf course lakes on Sanibel remain "impaired" for nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus.

Managing stormwater runoff from golf courses on Sanibel is critical to ensure that that fertilizer and other chemicals used to maintain turf do not inadvertently impact sensitive areas such as lakes, wetlands, and coastal waters. While we realize that that each golf course is unique and was designed and permitted to function in a very specific way, all of the golf courses on Sanibel have the potential to discharge into natural waterbodies. As a result, the City has taken additional measures to ensure that water leaving golf course lakes meet the water quality standards of the receiving waters.

In an effort to improve the quality of water discharged from Sanibel's golf courses, in October 2008 City Council adopted a list of Nutrient Management Recommendations that were based on the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's *Best Management Practices for the Enhancement of Environmental Quality on Florida Golf Courses* (2008). These recommendations provide specific guidance for golf course managers on how to reduce fertilizer use and to help improve water quality within their respective golf course lakes. Over the past three and half years since their adoption, City staff has worked closely with each of the golf courses to provide technical assistance to help implement these recommendations with varying levels of success.

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On July 27, 2012, City Natural Resources Department staff met with Dan Toolen, Golf Course Superintendent, of the Beachview Golf Club to review the status of implementing the City's Golf Course Nutrient and Lake Management Recommendations. As a result of that meeting, the City has updated the Annual Report Card and shoreline vegetation map for the Beachview golf course (see attached documents). This Annual Report Card has been developed for each of the island's golf courses to provide feedback on progress towards implementing the City's recommendations. This report will be provided to each golf course on an annual basis to help track progress and guide implementation.

This Report Card uses a point system to evaluate performance. For each recommendation or best management practice (BMP) implemented, 1-5 points are awarded based on the level of implementation. Out of a total of 13 BMPS, a maximum of 65 points can be awarded. The score is calculated as follows: 0 – 80% - Not in Compliance, 81 – 90% - Partially in Compliance, 91 – 100% - Full Compliance.

The Beachview Golf Club received **45** out of a total of 65 points, resulting in a score of **69%**. This indicates that the Beachview golf course is "**Not in Compliance**" with the City's recommendations (see report card below for details). **This year's score represents a 12% improvement over last year.**

BMP Matrix / Staff Recommendation	Score
<b>Education</b>	
Require that each superintendent ensure that all course employees are trained in the <i>Best Management Practices for the Enhancement of Environmental Quality on Florida Golf Courses</i> (FDEP 2007), including water quality related issues and environmentally sensitive areas around the golf course.	5
<b>Lake Management</b>	
Within 5 years of adoption, a minimum of 30% of the littoral zone of each golf course lake must be planted and maintained with submerged or emergent aquatic vegetation on a minimum of 3' centers.	3
Require that golf courses monitor the water quality in their lakes 2x/year (wet season/dry season) and provide the data to the City's Natural Resources Department. Minimum parameters should include dissolved oxygen (DO), total nitrogen (TN), total phosphorus (TP), chlorophyll a (chl-a), and copper (Cu). If nutrient or heavy metal concentrations are excessive, City staff will meet with golf course management staff to review and determine a mitigation plan.	0
Require that all fish kills and algae blooms are reported to the City's Natural Resources Department.	5
<b>Fertilizer Management</b>	
Limit soluble nitrogen applications to ½ lb/1,000ft <sup>2</sup>	5
Identify and map environmentally sensitive areas within the golf course and identify no fertilizer buffer zones around all of the waterbodies and map drainage patterns.	0
Require 25-foot native plant or unfertilized grass buffers around environmentally sensitive areas such as lakes and wetlands, where practical. When a 25-foot buffer is impractical, a minimum 10-foot buffer is required.	2
Require that grass buffers around environmentally sensitive areas such as lakes and wetlands be mowed 2" higher than the other grass to slow and filter overland flow to waterbodies.	4
Require that all washdown facilities have runoff properly treated prior to discharge off of the site.	5
Require periodic inspections of fertilizer storage areas and washdown facilities by DNR staff.	5
Require that all golf courses on the island maintain annual fertilizer and copper sulfate logs and make them available to the City's Natural Resources Department.	4
<b>Irrigation and Fertigation</b>	
Require that all reuse water be setback 25-feet from all waterbodies and that all irrigation heads using reuse water or fertigation (application of fertilizer through an irrigation system) be setback 25-feet from a waterbody. When a 25-foot buffer is impractical, a minimum 10-foot buffer is required.	2
Require that golf courses quantify their water use and differentiate between reuse and potable water supplies. This information can be used to account for the nutrients in reuse water when making fertilizer calculations.	5
Total Points (out of a maximum of 65 points):	<b>45</b>

**Areas currently meeting the City's recommendations:**

1.) Best Management Practices training for golf course staff. In spring of 2012, Beachview implemented a formal BMP training program for golf course personnel based on the Sanctuary's training program. All golf course personnel (total of 8) have been through the training and have acknowledged they have been trained and understand the basic principles of the *Best Management Practices for the Enhancement of Environmental Quality on Florida Golf Courses*.

2.) The planting of shoreline vegetation along golf course lakes to facilitate nutrient removal. Within 5 years of adoption of the City's recommendations, all golf courses are supposed to have a minimum of 30% of the shoreline of each lake vegetated with submerged or emergent aquatic plants. Because aquatic shoreline vegetation is one of the easiest ways to remove nutrients, it is critical that lakes be vegetated and a maintenance program be implemented to harvest 10-20% of the mature plants annually to help facilitate nutrient removal. At this time, a majority of the Sanibel River is buffered with native wetland vegetation and emergent shoreline vegetation; however, the lakes within the golf course have very little or no emergent or submerged aquatic vegetation. Additional efforts should be made to install vegetation along the shoreline of all golf course lakes (minimum of 30%).

3.) Reporting of fish kills and algae blooms in golf course lakes. All fish kills and algae blooms were reported to City staff.

4.) Limit soluble nitrogen applications to ½ lb/1,000 ft<sup>2</sup>. Golf course staff has indicated that they currently limit application of soluble nitrogen to ½ lb/1,000 ft<sup>2</sup>. This minimizes the potential for runoff of soluble nitrogen into lakes available to algae.

5.) Require that grass buffers around environmentally sensitive areas such as lakes and wetlands be mowed 2" higher than other grass to slow and filter runoff. Grass along the edge of the lakes is allowed to grow to at least 2" higher than grass on greens, fairways and tees to help slow water and nutrient runoff.

6.) Proper maintenance of washdown facilities and runoff. The washdown facilities were in good working order and all washdown water is being contained on site.

7.) Allow City staff to conduct periodic inspections of golf course facilities. Beachview's staff has been very cooperative and has provided full access to the golf course and all of its facilities for annual inspections. During the most recent inspection, the maintenance facility and washdown area appeared to be in good working order.

8.) Maintain and make available fertilizer records and copper sulfate logs. Beachview staff maintains annual fertilizer and lake management records. This data was made available to City staff.

9.) Quantify golf course water use and the source of water used. Beachview quantifies their water use. All water used to irrigate the course is reuse water provided by the City.

**Areas needing improvement:**

1.) Water quality monitoring and reporting. Beachview does not currently monitor water quality in any of their golf course lakes. The only water quality monitoring that occurs near the Beachview Golf Course, is monthly monitoring conducted by the City of Sanibel within the Sanibel River near Casa Ybel Road and the Donax WWTP.

2.) Identify and map environmentally sensitive areas around golf course lakes. Formal mapping has not been completed. Mapping should be conducted to identify environmentally sensitive areas and where BMPs would have the greatest impact on improving water quality in the golf course lakes and adjacent natural areas.

3.) Require 25-foot native plant or unfertilized grass buffers or 10-foot buffers where 25-foot is impractical around environmentally sensitive areas. Buffers have not been formally established in all areas; however, 25' buffers are maintained along a large portion of the Sanibel River as a condition of Beachview's South Florida Water Management District permit. As of May 2011, golf course staff has also begun leaving a 10' no-mow and no-fertilizer zone around several of the lakes.

4.) Require that all irrigation heads using reuse water be set back 25' from all waterbodies or 10' where 25' is impractical. The current irrigation design includes several heads that are located within 10' of golf course lakes and the Sanibel River. Buffer plantings should be considered to help reduce the potential for malfunctioning heads spraying into sensitive areas.

**Progress on 2011–2012 Interim Goals**

The Beachview golf course 2011 –2012 interim goals included:

1. Implement a formal BMP training program and require that all golf course employees complete the training by July 2012.
2. Install submerged or emergent shoreline vegetation on both sides of the Sanibel River in the area between holes #2 and #11.
3. Discontinue mowing to the water's edge along golf course lakes and create a no-fertilizer zone around all environmentally sensitive areas including lakes and wetlands.

The Beachview golf course has implemented a formal BMP training program for all of their golf course personnel. A total of 8 employees have attended formal BMP training conducted by the Golf Course Superintendent, Dan Toolen.

No additional submerged or emergent vegetation was installed at the Beachview golf course between July 2011–2012.

Golf course maintenance staff has discontinued mowing to the water's edge along lakes and have created a narrow (<10') no-mow/no-fertilizer buffer zone along a majority of the lakes. This buffer should be increased to at least 10'.

**Interim goals for 2012–2013 include:**

1. Complete 2011–2012 interim goal: Install submerged or emergent shoreline vegetation on both sides of the Sanibel River in the area between holes #2 and #11.
2. Implement water quality monitoring in golf course lakes 2x/year (wet season/dry season) and provide the data to the City's Natural Resources Department.
3. Identify and map environmentally sensitive areas around golf course lakes.
4. Increase native plant or unfertilized grass buffers around environmentally sensitive areas such as lakes and wetlands, where practical. When a 25-foot buffer is impractical, a minimum 10-foot buffer is required.

## Compliance with Golf Course Nutrient and Lake Management Recommendations

Adopted by Sanibel City Council October 2008 - Updated July 30, 2012

Staff Recommendation	Beachview Golf Course
<b>Education</b>	
Require that each superintendent ensure that all course employees are trained in the <i>Best Management Practices for the Enhancement of Environmental Quality on Florida Golf Courses</i> (FDEP 2007), including water quality related issues and environmentally sensitive areas around the golf course.	Beachview implemented a formal BMP training program for golf course personnel based on the Sanctuary's training program. All golf course personnel (total of 8) have been through the training and have acknowledged they have been trained and understand the basic principles of the Best Management Practices for the Enhancement of Environmental Quality on Florida Golf Courses.
<b>Lake Management</b>	
Within 5 years of adoption, a minimum of 30% of the littoral zone of each golf course lake must be planted and maintained with submerged or emergent aquatic vegetation on a minimum of 3' centers.	Shoreline along Sanibel River in compliance as condition of their SFWMD permit. Other lakes on course do not meet 30% requirement. Staff indicated that due to economic hardship they have not been able to comply, as they do not have extra money to spend on plantings. Did not meet 2011-2012 interim shoreline vegetation planting goal.
Require that golf courses monitor the water quality in their lakes 2x/year (wet season/dry season) and provide the data to the City's Natural Resources Department. Minimum parameters should include dissolved oxygen (DO), total nitrogen (TN), total phosphorus (TP), chlorophyll a (chl-a), and copper (Cu). If nutrient or heavy metal concentrations are excessive, City staff will meet with golf course management staff to review and determine a mitigation plan.	No water quality monitoring in golf course lakes. Only water quality monitoring in areas is monitoring of the Sanibel River conducted by City. They currently do not have plans to conduct water quality monitoring in golf course lakes due to lack of funding.
Require that all fish kills and algae blooms are reported to the City's Natural Resources Department.	All fish kills and algae blooms have been reported
<b>Fertilizer Management</b>	
Limit soluble nitrogen applications to ½ lb/1000ft <sup>2</sup>	Currently limit soluble nitrogen applications to 1/2 lb/1000 ft <sup>2</sup>
Identify and map environmentally sensitive areas within the golf course and identify no fertilizer buffer zones around all of the waterbodies and map drainage patterns.	Environmentally sensitive areas not formally mapped.
Require 25-foot native plant or unfertilized grass buffers around environmentally sensitive areas such as lakes and wetlands, where practical. When a 25-foot buffer is impractical, a minimum 10-foot buffer is required.	Vegetation buffers exist along mainstem of the Sanibel River as a condition of their SFWMD permit. Buffers have not been fully established on lakes located in the central portion of the course.
Require that grass buffers around environmentally sensitive areas such as lakes and wetlands be mowed 2" higher than the other grass to slow and filter overland flow to waterbodies.	No-mow zones have been established; some lakes have roughs between 2-6" in height.
Require that all washdown facilities have runoff properly treated prior to discharge off of the site.	Washdown facility in compliance and washdown water treated prior to discharge.
Require periodic inspections of fertilizer storage areas and washdown facilities by DNR staff.	Natural Resources staff provided access to facility for inspections and compliance checks.
Require that all golf courses on the island maintain annual fertilizer and copper sulfate logs and make them available to the City's Natural Resources Department.	Fertilizer logs available. Staff indicated that they do not use copper sulfate to treat lakes for algae blooms.
<b>Irrigation and Fertigation</b>	
Require that all reuse water be setback 25-feet from all waterbodies and that all irrigation heads using reuse water or fertigation (application of fertilizer through an irrigation system) be setback 25-feet from a waterbody. When a 25-foot buffer is impractical, a minimum 10-foot buffer is required.	Several irrigation heads within 25' of waterbodies, including the Sanibel River. Irrigation inspected frequently and fertigation is not used. Reuse water provided by City is used to irrigate golf course. Reuse water holding pond should be lined to prevent infiltration into the Sanibel River.
Require that golf courses quantify their water use and differentiate between reuse and potable water supplies. This information can be used to account for the nutrients in reuse water when making fertilizer calculations.	All water used on golf course is reuse water and records kept.