



The Bronze Signature Program



Intersection Ditch flowing through Haymaker Golf Course in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, is buffered with native grasses to provide habitat for fish and cover for predators that hunt there. Haymaker was the first Certified Bronze Signature Sanctuary in the state of Colorado.



The Green Machine provides waste water treatment for the students attending classes and living at Conserve School in Land O'Lakes, Wisconsin. Conserve School was the first school in Wisconsin and in the world to become designated as a Certified Bronze Signature Sanctuary.

The Bronze Signature Program is an environmental education, review, and audit program created to help landowners and managers follow sustainable resource management principles in a comprehensive manner when developing and then managing properties.

The purpose of the program is to integrate wildlife conservation, habitat restoration and enhancement, water conservation and water quality protection, and other areas of environmental protection and improvement with the other objectives for the development. The Bronze Signature Program's long-term goal is to foster a stewardship ethic that leads landowners and managers, consultants, and the community to consider environmental benefits, as well as economic costs, in their decision making and to apply these environmental values routinely in land management.

Eligibility

Although many Bronze Signature Program member properties are golf courses, the program is not just for golf development. Any project in the planning stage, including a major redevelopment, may apply for membership in the program. Among present non-golf members are a retail facility, a marina, a private preparatory school, and an athletic field/sports complex. Membership, however, is limited to projects involving *only a single type of land use*. The Bronze Signature Program is also limited to projects located in the continental United States or Canada. Projects are no longer eligible for the Bronze Signature Program when installation of major infrastructure, such as an irrigation system or sewerage, begins on the property.

The Natural Resource Management Plan

The Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) is the essence of the Signature Program. The designation of *Certified Bronze Audubon Signature Sanctuary* is contingent upon the quality and completeness of the NRMP and its implementation. Components of the NRMP must be drafted and submitted to Audubon International for review and comment prior to implementation of proposed plans in order to ensure that all environmental concerns are addressed. The NRMP must be revised in response to Audubon International's comments until it is satisfactory. Submission of an acceptable NRMP after plans, designs, or projects have been implemented may jeopardize the designation as a Certified Bronze Audubon Signature Sanctuary.



The St. Mark Presbyterian Church development team began the Signature Program process by assessing the vegetation located on the new project site. This church project, located in Newport Beach, California, is the first church project to be registered in the Signature Program worldwide.



Maintaining wildlife inventories at Certified Signature Sanctuaries can provide insight into trends for the types and numbers of wildlife species using the property regularly. Birding activities, such as this one at Tierra Verde in Arlington, Texas, is an opportunity to also educate local residents about the birds that are living in their community.

Site Visits

Bronze Signature Program members usually receive three site visits. The initial site visit occurs approximately six weeks after registration and provides early guidance and education on NRMP-writing, and clearing, construction, and maintenance. The second visit occurs mid-construction and reviews progress and evaluates compliance with program requirements to date. The third visit is the Final Environmental Audit to determine if the project will be certified.

Achieving & Maintaining Certification

To become certified as a Bronze Audubon Signature Sanctuary, a project must comply with all the *generally applicable minimum requirements* for all Signature projects. It must also meet whatever additional, site-specific conditions and requirements are reasonable in light of its particular resources, features, facilities, and other circumstances.

No property can become a Certified Bronze Audubon Signature Sanctuary without passing a *final on-site audit*. The audit by Audubon International staff provides an independent validation by this not-for-profit environmental organization that the property has been developed and is being maintained in compliance with all applicable requirements and the provisions of the NRMP.

In order to maintain membership status and certification, the project must submit any required documentation, an annual report, and annual membership fees on a timely basis. It must also host a recertification site audit every two years, which is designed to determine whether the project continues to be operated and maintained in accordance with all applicable requirements and the provisions of the NRMP.

Bronze Signature Program Benefits

A land owner or developer can look forward to substantial benefits from participation and achievement of certification in the Bronze Signature Program:

- **“Green appeal” marketing edge.** More and more people are looking for “green,” environmentally-friendly developments where they can live and enjoy recreational activities. The environmental and aesthetic appeal of properties that become certified in an Audubon International Signature Program give a property a marketing edge that supports increased sales prices or member fees, faster sales, and lower marketing and holding costs.



The Shenendoah at Turning Stone Casino Resort in upstate New York integrates the golf course layout with the existing site features, native grasses, and wildlife habitat on this Oneida Indian Nation property. This project is the first Certified Bronze Audubon Signature Sanctuary in New York and on sovereign land.



World Wide Sportsman is a retail facility, travel agency, and marina located in Islamorada, Florida along the Florida Bay, which is one of the world's most important feeding grounds for saltwater fish species. World Wide Sportsman was the first non-golf Certified Bronze Audubon Signature Sanctuary in the world.

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- **Operation and maintenance cost savings.** The sound environmental techniques and practices embodied in the Bronze Signature Program incorporate use of the right turf, as well as low maintenance landscaping and natural areas, and reduce the amounts of managed turf, water, fertilizers, chemicals, fuels and other energy, equipment, equipment maintenance, and labor needed, all producing long-term savings in operation and maintenance costs. These life-cycle cost savings provide substantial financial benefits to land owners for the long term and command a premium on sale.
- **Reduced risk.** The environmental stewardship practices incorporated in the Bronze Signature Program cut the use of hazardous materials on site and the possibility of migration to water bodies or off-site properties, reducing risk of harm and potential liability to any residents, members, visitors, neighbors, or employees. Those reduced risks in turn lower insurance and workers' compensation costs, potential for adverse regulatory action and harmful publicity, and lost worker time.
- **Higher employee productivity.** Managers and other employees working on certified Audubon Signature Sanctuary properties feel better and more satisfied about their own work and relation to the land. They also have less exposure to chemicals and hazardous conditions. As a result, absenteeism, sick days, and workers compensation are reduced and employee productivity is higher.

Costs

The current registration fee for the Bronze Signature Program is \$12,500 (US Dollars). That amount includes the first year \$500 annual membership fee, which continues for subsequent years and is billed near the month of initial registration.

In addition to the registration and annual membership fee, a member pays travel and related costs for site visits by Signature Program staff. There are three site visits required for the Bronze Signature Program. Expenses for these visits are not covered in the registration or membership fee.

Recertification site reviews are scheduled every two years to ensure that the quality at which the project was certified is still being maintained. The cost of the visit is currently \$800 per day plus expenses.