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Courtesy of Kapalua Golf/Dave Sansom

Hawai'i course reaches environmental milestone

Kapalua Golf's Plantation Course celebrates 25 years as certified Audubon International Cooperative Sanctuary.

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By: Golf Course Industry staff

Audubon International has recognized Kapalua Golf's Plantation Course for 25 years of certification as an Audubon International Cooperative Sanctuary. Audubon International recently presented Kapalua Golf general manager Alex Nakajima with a plaque commemorating the achievement. Kapalua Golf is currently following Maui Mayor Victorino's mandated shutdown and hopes to reopen for play in the coming weeks.

Through participation in the Audubon International Cooperative Sanctuary for golf program, Kapalua Golf's Plantation Course has been involved in numerous environmental projects, including adopting a comprehensive environmental management program focused on wildlife and habitat management; conserving energy and reducing water use; utilizing integrated pest management techniques; naturalizing areas; managing resources in an environmentally responsible manner; and outreach and education.

"We're very proud to count Kapalua Plantation Course among our members," said Christine Kane, CEO at Audubon International. "They made environmentally sustainable golf course management an integral part of their operating principles long before it became an accepted option. Their leadership has already brought many benefits to their community over the past 25 years and will continue to do so long into the future."

To reach certification in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, a course must maintain a high degree of environmental quality in several areas including: environmental planning, wildlife and habitat management, outreach and education, chemical use reduction and safety, water conservation, and water quality management. After designation, courses must go through a recertification process every three years. Kapalua Plantation Course is one of 858 courses in the world to be designated as a certified ACSP for Golf course.

In addition, Kapalua golf facilities director Kalani Kaleiopu worked with the Pu'u Kukui Watershed, the largest private nature preserve in the state of Hawai'i, to include native plants and signage around the Plantation Course clubhouse. A four-minute video, showing native plants, their history and significance to the islands, is currently on rotation in the Plantation Course clubhouse for all guests to see.

"Throughout the 2019 refinement of the Plantation Course, we went to great lengths to maintain our Audubon International Cooperative Sanctuary status," Nakajima said. "Director of agronomy Andrew Rebman and our entire agronomy team deserve a ton of credit for managing our natural resources in an environmentally responsible way, while growing-in and maintaining a championship-level golf course."

Kapalua's Plantation Course reopened in late November 2019 following a nine-month, multi-million dollar enhancement project. Original Plantation Course architects Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw oversaw the refinement project along with Troon's Design, Development and Agronomy team and Golf Channel personality Mark Roling. During the nine-month project all 107 acres of fairways, tees and rough were grassed with Celebration Bermuda grass, while all greens were grassed with TifEagle Bermudagrass. A Capillary Concrete liner system was installed in all 93 course bunkers, allowing the bunkers to better weather heavy rain events.