

U.S. Non-collegiate Golf Course Superintendent's Perception of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program

Wyatt Byrd¹, David Kopsell¹, Aslihan Spaulding¹, Ann Marie VanDerZanden², and Dean Kopsell³

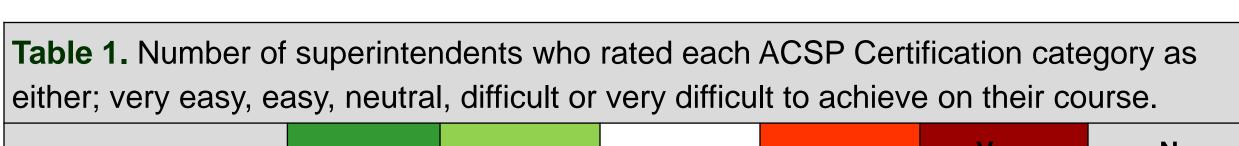
- ¹ Department of Agriculture, Illinois State University, Normal, IL; ² Department of Horticulture, Iowa State University, Ames, IA;
- ³ Department of Plant Sciences, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN



Introduction

The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) is administered by Audubon International (Troy, NY) and is a partnership with the United States Golf Association which recognizes sustainable golf course management practices. There are six categories of the ACSP certification (Figure 1). Currently, 13% of the estimated 15,000 golf courses in the U.S. have achieved some level of ACSP certification, while only 5% of U.S. golf courses have achieved certification in all six categories (1).





ACSP Category	Very Easy	Easy	Neutral	Difficult	Very Difficult	No Certification
Environmental Planning	1	13	27	7	0	1
Wildlife and Habitat Management	1	16	23	5	0	3
Chemical Use Reduction and Safety	0	14	22	9	1	2
Water Conservation	5	14	20	5	1	3
Water Quality Management	2	14	19	8	3	2
Outreach and Education	1	5	25	11	4	3
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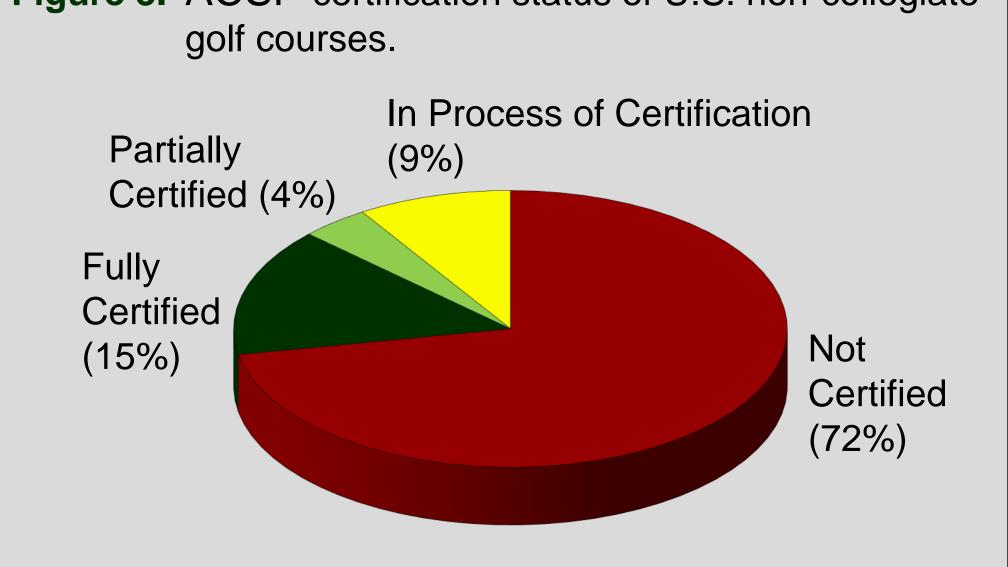


Figure 1. Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Certification Categories (1).



Environmental Planning



Wildlife & Habitat Management



Chemical Use Reduction & Safety



Water Conservation



Water Quality Management



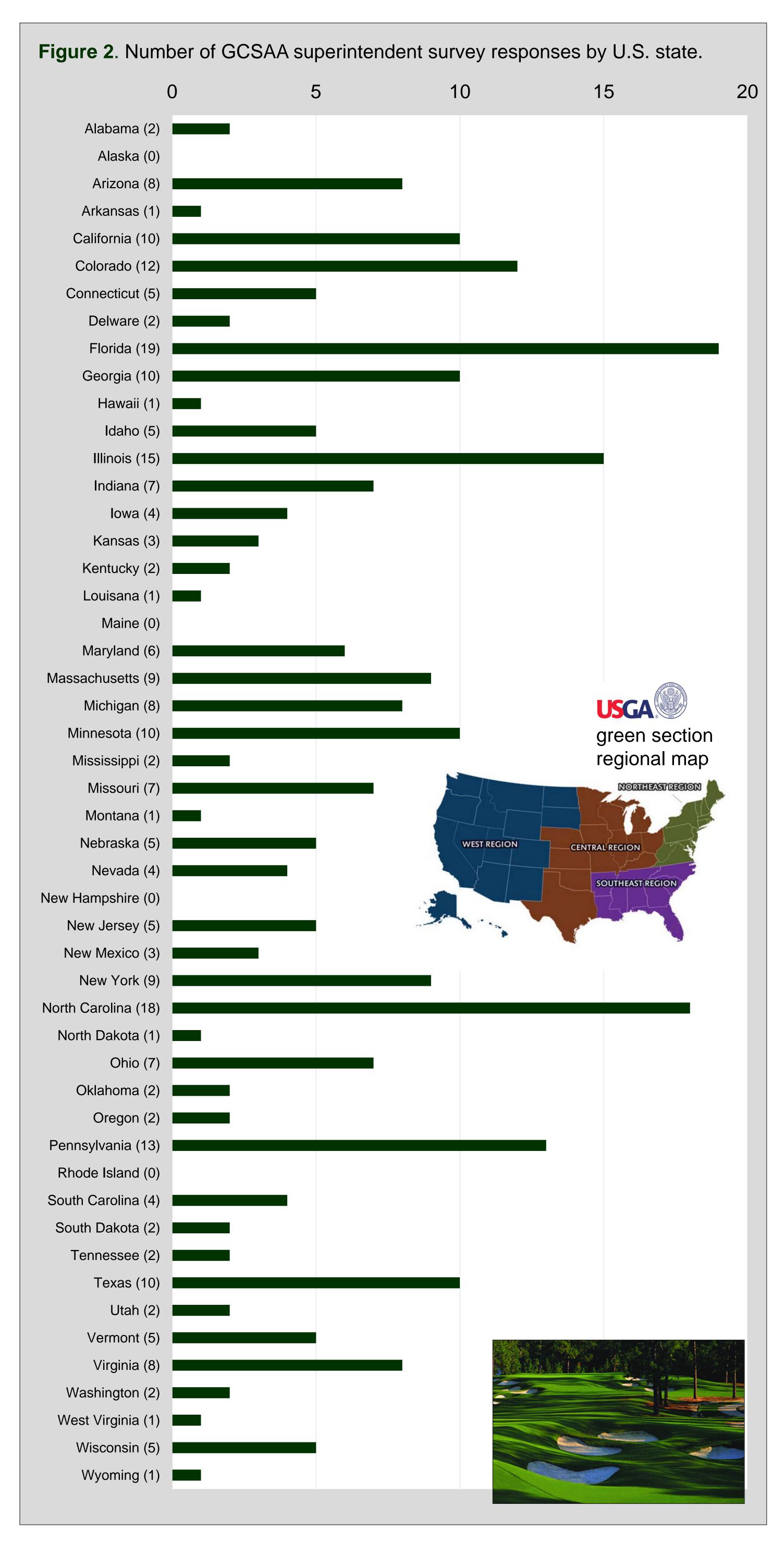
Outreach & Education

Survey Methodology

A cross-sectional, self-administered online questionnaire developed in Qualtrics consisting of a mix of 37 closed- and open-ended questions was emailed to a random sample of 1,500 U.S. golf course superintendents obtained from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) over the winter of 2013-2014 (2,3,4). Survey questions and letter of consent were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Illinois State University (protocol number 2013-0156) prior to dissemination. Data was analyzed using Chi-square and Cox multiple regression analysis. The survey had 263 responses representing superintendents in 46 U.S. states (Figure 2).

Survey Results

- 28% of superintendents identified their golf course as having some level of environmental stewardship certification, including ACSP certification.
- 82% of superintendents identified environmental sustainability as the main reason for achieving ACSP certification.
- 50% of superintendents who are not ACSP-certified said they were interested in pursuing ACSP certification.
- Top reasons identified for not being certified included; (1) lack of budget; (2) lack of benefit of certification; and (3) lack of time to devote to the certification process.
- Superintendents identified an average of 3 four- or two-year colleges near their course; 57% having agricultural, horticultural, or turfgrass programs.
- Although 34% of superintendents reported having students involved on their course, only 6% said student activities were educational.
- 85% of superintendents would favor student involvement in ACSP certification efforts.





Conclusions

Interest exists in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program at U.S. golf courses. There is also interest in student assistance from superintendents in the ACSP certification process. While cost was the biggest reason for not being certified, it was reported by superintendents at ACSP-certified courses that time and labor involved in certification are actually the most difficult obstacles to overcome.



Cited References

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