



PDGA Environmental Committee

The relationship that the sport of disc golf has with the environment is an integral part of the golfing experience and is the core reason we develop satisfaction from hucking formed plastic objects at high (and low) speeds into pre-determined targets.

The setting and courses that we visit create the fundamental reasons why we play the sport of disc golf. Through the education, protection, and installation of new disc golf courses the PDGA Environmental Committee (PDGAEC) is positioned to help your course address the development questions that are sure to come up.

The PDGA Environmental Committee provides assistance in Education, Protection, Installation, Support, and Documentation for new and existing disc golf courses.
This is our MISSION!

The very essence of the game of disc golf comes down to throwing a round in a beautiful setting with friends while exploring the flight of different discs. The goal of the PDGA Environmental Committee is to assemble a group of individuals who have varied disc golf course development related and supporting backgrounds together to provide education / support for existing / potential disc golf courses projects throughout the USA.

As we play this great sport we need to be aware of the ways that we affect the land, the plants, and the animals that we share our courses with. In many cases disc golf has resulted in significant environmental improvement to areas that were previously considered "undesirable" land. There are still many challenges and opportunities for members to get involved with the development of new courses into areas that will push the growth of the sport into the future. Through educating those who are installing new courses using low impact development techniques we hope to create an environmental awareness from the start of the project.

The PDGA Environmental Committee is an assembly of regional representatives that is organized into groups that represent different sectors of environmental awareness throughout the Professional Disc Golf Association. All projects, ideas, suggestion, and programs regarding the environmental impact of disc golf will be addressed within this group.

The primary duties of the Environmental Committee will be to:

1. Educate players and course designers about the impacts the sport of disc golf has on existing and proposed courses.
2. Provide detailed input, advice, and general expertise in specific areas related to disc golf courses.
3. Store and create environmental documents and/or data using courses around the country as case

subjects. Make this information readily available to course designers, operators, parks departments, and publications.

4. Promote sustainability and recycling efforts throughout the organization by committing to ALWAYS choose a GREEN product and or service when feasibly and finically appropriate.

The PDGA is the governing body for the sport of disc golf and they are committed to the growth of the game through creating environmentally responsible development of courses and education programs. They support the growth of the game using sustainable and green friendly practices and are proactive in looking for ways to implement these ideas into national programs.

The PDGAEC is a cyber-committee comprised of members from all over the world. We can be reached through committee chair, Patrick Farrell, farrellpatrick@charter.net . Pat can then route the communication to the rest of the committee. We can help you interface with parks departments, answer questions about environmental issues and course maintenance, and be a general contact for these issues. This committee is also represented by Jason Allind, the PDGA International Disc Golf Center course superintendent.

We are actively looking for committee members who are interested in getting involved with our efforts and especially members who have a background that specifically supports our mission. If you have the time and are serious about being an active member with this group please contact us. In addition if you have any environmental documentation regarding the course you are involved with, we would greatly appreciate if you would forward it to this committee so we can make it available to others. Examples would include any memo's, permits, and environmental documentation of any kind especially those that show the positive aspects of developing a disc golf course. We are also interested in generalized books, documents, letters of support, or references you might feel would be relevant to this subject.

The core of our mission is to anticipate, plan, prevent, and address environmental impact for the sport of disc golf.

The PDGA strongly recommends that existing and proposed disc golf courses create and implement a maintenance plan to address vegetation growth, erosion, soil compaction, waste management, and recycling programs to name a few. This is increasingly important as the sport of disc golf continues to experience explosive growth and popularity. Through this growth more popular and challenging courses will especially increase in environmental impact as the sport grows There are many ways to address negative impacts on the courses we play, but the most frequently used are:

1. Establish a volunteer maintenance program using existing disc golf clubs as the core volunteer group. Educate a specialized group within the volunteer group to address specific prioritized tasks.
2. Acquire funding from the entity in charge of the land where the course is located to support your environmental programs and efforts. Sometime parks and recreation districts will be willing to funds maintenance efforts to relieve the strain on their own staff.
3. Fund and maintenance program by charging players a nominal fee to play the course.

Goals of the disc golf maintenance program:

The goal of the disc golf maintenance program is to lessen the impact of the disc golf to a given area. Measures include a range of elements that include everything from physical structures such as trails, bridges, and trash receptacles to subtle changes in course design to steer players away from sensitive areas that may be home to endangered plants and animals. In addition to addition to keeping targets,

tee signs, teeing surface, trash receptacles, and benches in working order, the maintenance program should include:

1. Create established, easily recognized, and maintained trails that draw foot traffic away from sensitive areas while directing players to the next section of the course in the most efficient way.
2. Actively address areas of impaction, distress, and wear by: replanting, reseeding, mulching, and or applying appropriate ground cover to lessen the "footprint" that players have on the disc golf course.
3. Control weeds and or non-native species using environmentally friendly products.
4. Take measures to protect ALL sensitive vegetation on the course. Use approved devices to lessen the impact discs and players have on vegetation throughout the course property.
5. Preserve, create, and honor the aesthetic value of your disc golf course through the use of desirable ground covers, bridges, pathways, plantings, and educational signs.

At this point it bears repeating the first rule of mitigation and maintenance: it is far better to anticipate, plan, and prevent than it is to fix or repair. This brings us to our next topic; building and designing new courses.

Proposed Courses

Most proposed courses are in parks, which are for the most part, designated for recreational use, and disc golf is an entirely appropriate activity for these areas. In fact disc golf courses have a far less impact than the commonly accepted land alterations for recreational activities, such as: ball golf, tennis courts, soccer or baseball fields, etc. When you think about it, a disc golf course leaves the structural integrity of existing vegetation largely intact, while a ball golf course, soccer fields, or tennis court requires earth moving and destruction of portions of the land in which they are developed. However, before proposing a course to any parks department, land owner, or recreation district, it is highly recommended that you acquire any existing land use plans and or grading / erosion control plans for the area you are considering and thoroughly acquaint yourself with the documents. This step can and will save an enormous amount of time, energy, and work later on. We encourage you to contact the PDGA Environmental Committee at any time you need assistance with proceeding forward progress at this step. Parks departments generally have a land use "master plan", and if you can show that your course proposal fulfills the goals and needs of that plan, you stand a much better chance of getting a vote of approval for moving towards the permanent installation of your course.

Disc Golf Designer Group

If you are contemplating seeking permission to install a course on a tract of land, the PDGA strongly recommends seeking the advice of a professional disc golf course designer. The Disc Golf Course Designer Group (DGCG) is comprised of qualified regional disc golf course designers that can help with all aspects of disc golf course design including environmental impacts. Contact Chuck Kennedy (ck34@aol.com) to find out more about a designer in your area. The PDGA further recommends (as stated earlier) that the new course proposal includes a maintenance plan and schedule which states how and when these activities will be addressed after the course installation. The Environmental Committee can in some cases provide onsite consultation to assess and create the maintenance plan with you and your parks department.

Land Use Plan

Even if a land use plan exists, the folks that manage that land will have questions about what kind of effect and impact the disc golf course will have on the land. In general, it is best to be as honest as you can about these impacts in hopes of finding appropriate means and methods to address potential issues. Even if there is a plan, you should use the following guidelines to analyze for yourself what the true

impacts will be. The idea is to take the general concepts discussed here, and apply them to a specific situation or location you are involved with. This process can require many field visits and extensive documentation of weather patterns, course vegetation, course usage, and future needs to name a few. The core thought here should center around the understanding of the property in which the course will interact BEFORE course construction, while once again, anticipating how the course will be used on a daily basis into the future.

Impact Analysis

The first two steps of the impact analysis are to determine the appropriateness of the proposed location and then to apply the general impact analysis to the specific location in question. Finally you should take into consideration what types of mitigation can be taken to lessen the impact in sensitive and high traffic areas. So, first we will talk about appropriateness of the proposed location, then generalized impacts, and finally mitigation. Remember, this applies to proposed courses.

Appropriateness of Location

Disc golf and the installation of a disc golf course are appropriate for the vast majority of parks and open spaces that are designed for recreational use. Indeed, if the area has already been designed for recreational use, then chances are that a specific site analysis has already been completed, and you can build on that work. So, find out what general plans exist for an area you feel disc golf would be an appropriate fit and see what issues have been identified. Again a qualified designer should easily find this information for (or with you) during an onsite visit, which could point out potential problem areas. If no "master plan" exists, or if the existing plans are too generalized, then certainly some site specific analysis may be appropriate. For this, contact the PDGAEC for further documentation and site assessment technical assistance / techniques.

General Impacts

Disc Golf courses do not generally require major land alterations, and usually do not require the use of chemicals to maintain the layout. So for these points the game is already headed in a direction of being a responsible user of the land. And although some disc golf courses are watered, it is not required, and the majority of the world's best places to play are done so on courses that are close to the lands natural state. Indeed, part (or most) of the joy of disc golf is experiencing the game in a natural setting. In most places, disc golf is a highly appropriate use of open space and has little lasting impact if properly maintained. Disc Golf course designers, parks department representatives, and players everywhere need to be aware of the effects that their activities have, and be especially aware of the simple things that they can do to help to reduce their footprint. Regular maintenance is required for courses that experience heavy use, but when regular maintenance is performed, the environmental impacts are minor.

Specific Effects of Disc Golf and Mitigation Measures

The installation of a disc golf course alters the numbers of people that walk through a given area, and players walk through places that would otherwise not normally see much foot traffic. This can have several effects on the land, the magnitude of which varies widely from site to site and depends on the volume of players that visit the course. Proper maintenance can largely negate this effect, but it is important to get a professional opinion and help with installing methods of addressing impact. When designing a new course, evaluate where the high foot traffic areas of the course will be. Each fairway should have a well defined main trail that will draw the bulk of the foot traffic, especially in areas with elevation relief. In high traffic area build in proper erosion control features into the course from the beginning and be especially mindful of using materials and methods that utilize onsite resources. Examples of erosion control features on a disc golf course include: stairs or steps, stabilizing side hill

trails with logs or cut banks, building small bridges over seasonal or permanent creeks, seeding or planting native species, blocking access to sensitive areas using bush or other traffic control objects, and the use of ground covering materials such as gravel, wood chips or mulch. Proper use of these techniques can significantly reduce the impact of the disc golf course to a given area. Contact the PDGAEC for further information and assistance on these techniques. Don't wait for a problem to develop before initiating a maintenance program or building proper foot traffic trails.

Litter

The PDGA has taken an active role in educating players about not littering. The PDGAEC is in the process of developing a solid set of guidelines, tips, brochures, and programs that specifically address waste management throughout the organization. For example, littering is a courtesy violation in the Rules of Disc Golf, and it is clearly stated that cigarette butts are considered litter. The mission for the PDGA and especially the PDGAEC is to "leave ALL disc golf courses cleaner than when you arrived" The vast majority of courses have resulted in cleaner parks, and in many cases, disc golfers have initiated extensive cleanup efforts prior to installing their course. As we move into the future it will be equally important for players to create and manage recycling programs for their course and to educate new and beginning players about the importance of doing the same.

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Create new places to play
Develop educational programs and maintenance activities
Have Fun
Stay Healthy

PLAY DISC GOLF!

Professional Disc Golf Association Environmental Committee
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