

# Case Study

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BallenIsles  
Country Club  
Palm Beach Gardens, FL

A private club and  
residential community

Built in 1963

Designed by Dick Wilson  
and Joe Lee

One of the Top 100  
Clubs in America

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Mike Meehan  
Director of Agronomy

“It was an easy sell to  
our membership. It’s one  
of the most cost-effective  
tools you can invest in.  
You won’t be sorry.”



## Environmental Protection

*Superintendent employs CourseVision to manage the complex with Mother Nature in mind*

If you’re caring for a golf course on either Florida coast, you know that between June 1 and Nov. 30, there’s a good chance you’ll have to deal with hurricanes ripping across your property. In some cases, like 2004 when three hurricanes ravaged the coasts within weeks, the damage to golf courses is immense and costly to repair.

Mike Meehan, director of agronomy at BallenIsles Country Club in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, went in search of a method of cataloging the entire course — all the way down to the exact location of every tree, building and decorative planting — to develop environmental strategies that would minimize the potential effects of hurricanes while improving his environmental stewardship at the same time. He found his solution in CourseVision.

“There are a lot of features with CourseVision that helped us solve numerous challenges we face,” Meehan says. “But first and foremost, we wanted to catalog items so we can restore the course to its natural splendor in the event of a hurricane or other disaster.”

### The Challenges

BallenIsles, a Troon Golf managed property, is enormous, covering nearly 1,000 acres 15 miles from the beaches of Florida’s Palm Coast. It contains three golf courses — North, South and East — and nearly 2,000 homes. Meehan realized early on that keeping track of the courses would be downright impossible unless they were able to find a method to keep all of the information in one place with accurate, GPS-verified measurements. In the case of a hurricane, Meehan could provide the insurance company with an exact accounting of what had to be replaced.

“We could have sent crew members out with a wheel and string to measure features like bunkers and greens, but the amount of time it would take to do that on such a large property would have been cost prohibitive,” Meehan says. “We needed a more automated system to make it happen.”

In addition, Meehan wanted the accurate mapping because he wanted to get the property certified as an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary course as well as measure the overall carbon footprint of the property.

“Those aren’t things we had to do, but it’s something our homeowners are interested in having us do,” Meehan says. “We want to be known as good neighbors, and becoming Audubon certified and figuring out how to be more environmentally sensitive was something we were interested in doing.”

When Meehan first heard about CourseVision, he thought it sounded like the perfect solution to his challenges.

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## Continued

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BallenIsles is a 1000 acre property with 465 acres of golf grounds. Here are some highlights of the golf property:

- 54 holes
- 342.42 acres of turf
- 9.20 acres of sand
- 265 aesthetic gardens
- 24.02 acres of pine straw
- 86.01 acres of fairway
- 18.56 acres of lakes
- 17.01 acres of cart paths
- 23 buildings
- 10.13 acres of greens
- 2.78 acres of coquina

### The Solution

When superintendents contract with CourseVision to provide a complete map of their golf course, it starts with an aerial photo of the property acquired by CourseVision from its established relationships with government and private aerial sources. Then the fun begins.

The team at CourseVision combines the photograph of the course with GPS coordinates to create a two-dimensional map of the entire property with exact measurements, square footage, and the latitude and longitude of all the course’s features. Then the team adds layers on top of the photo such as turf, bunkers, water features, buildings, cart paths, wetlands and gardens. Superintendents can turn on and off any of those layers as necessary to get at the information they need, which provides them powerful tools to communicate with owners, crew and their management team about on course activities and changes.

The beauty of CourseVision is how easy it is to learn how to use it. Meehan says he only spent two hours on the phone with the support team at the company, and he was able to use the program like an old pro.

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Meehan says he now has more information about his property than he ever thought possible. “We’re in the process of submitting the information to our insurance company to see if we can’t lower our rates because of how detailed our inventory is,” Meehan says. “We’re still waiting to hear, but they were more than impressed with our filing.”

One of the features that Meehan appreciates is that it comes with the ability to fill in the site assessment portion of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary application, something that would have been time-consuming to fill out manually for each course.

“It’s a really nice package,” Meehan says. “By the time CourseVision is done, they’ve already done a lot of the work for you. We’re looking forward to getting certified because we know our homeowners care about the environment.”

In addition to the impact CourseVision has had on how Meehan manages the course, he says it’s had a dramatic impact on the attitudes of the country club’s board of directors. Now when Meehan goes before them with a suggested bunker renovation or greens restructuring, the members are much more willing to hear him out and fund the project than they were before.

“When people can touch and feel things — really see what we’re talking about doing and why — they are much more likely to take it seriously and to fund the project,” Meehan says. “I just made a presentation on our

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BallenIsles (then called PGA National Golf Club) has hosted major tournament play and was the home of the PGA of America. It has hosted the PGA Seniors' Championship, the PGA Championship, the World Cup, the first PGA Merchandise Show, and the original qualifying school for the PGA tour.

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renovation work to our board of directors, and they were impressed by the scope of what CourseVision can do."

## The Future

Meehan says he hasn't had the program for long, but he foresees a host of other uses for CourseVision in the future. He says it will help him more accurately forecast chemical costs and renovations, which will improve the development's bottom line. He plans to use it as well to train his spray applicators and technicians as well.

"We're looking forward, as we get more comfortable with the product, to using it to do training," Meehan says. "It won't be theoretical any longer — we'll be able to show them exactly where they should put the chemicals and how much they should put down."

But the greatest impact will be if the Homeowners Association gets on board to map the 2,000 homes surrounding the course. He believes that having that information will enhance the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary program and will also benefit the homeowners for insurance purposes.

"Once we're able to label all of the houses on the course, it will enhance our ability to treat the golf course and get to know our owners even more than we already do," he says. "We would be happy to partner with them so they can get their landscaping on the map. There are a lot of features in CourseVision that would help make living in BallenIsles an even more rewarding experience."

Meehan says the one-time fee he paid for CourseVision will pay for itself in no time. "It was an easy sell to our membership," Meehan says. "It's one of the most cost-effective tools you can invest in. You won't be sorry."

