



March 23, 2020

Governor John Bel Edwards
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Re: Clarification on Golf / Continued Maintenance of Closed Golf Courses During COVID-19

Dear Governor Edwards:

On behalf of the Louisiana Golf Association, Gulf States PGA Section, Louisiana-Mississippi Chapter of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, and the Pelican Chapter of the Club Managers Association of America (collectively representing over 100 golf courses and 14,000 individual members in Louisiana), thank you for your leadership during this challenging, unprecedented time. The effects of COVID-19 have been far-reaching across all sectors of life.

In response to *Proclamation Number 33 JBE 2020* and your *Stay at Home Order to Further Fight the Spread of COVID-19 in Louisiana* (published on March 22), we are writing to respectfully request clarification for the following:

1. Responsible golf as an approved outdoor activity.
2. Golf course maintenance as an essential business activity.

You said in your order that, “People are encouraged to go outside and to stay active during this time, as long as they practice social distancing when they are around their neighbors.” The clubhouse, golf shop and/or restaurant operation is a small part of the overall footprint of a golf course. We believe the field of play, which typically represents over 200 acres of open space land, should be treated differently. The opportunity for socially distant recreation on a golf course is much like taking a walk through a neighborhood, and it is easy for golfers to maintain a safe distance of at least six feet from one another. Golf course operators all over Louisiana and the United States have been taking extra precautions to ensure playing golf is a safe experience that complies with all health advisories and recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control. Golf is the perfect respite for Louisianans to get exercise and fresh air.

Although many golf courses in Louisiana have already modified their restaurant and clubhouse operations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and mandated restrictions, such as limiting all business to take-out food service, basic maintenance on the grounds cannot stop. Maintaining our state’s golf facilities during this time is a critical function.

If turfgrass is lost, many courses may face permanent closure. Any halt or delay in maintenance now will only accelerate the potential for significant turf loss on golf courses statewide in the weeks and months ahead. Additionally, without timely maintenance, these large green spaces can quickly become overrun with weeds and invasive species that can compound illness with large amounts of pollen and weed seed being released into the environment.

Rest assured, the golf industry is taking aggressive steps to “flatten the curve” and prevent the spread of COVID-19. CDC guided policies and best practices – such as social distancing, staggering of work schedules to reduce employee contact points, and increased sanitizing of all workspaces and bathrooms, to name just a few – have been implemented within our local golf ecosystem. Golf course maintenance, by its nature, is an outdoor activity performed by individuals working on their own, naturally keeping extensive distance from other workers and not interfacing with the general public.

We are supportive of our game and our members but not at the expense of what our state leadership dictates, so that is why we are requesting more clarification on your recent order. We respectfully point you to the state of Michigan, where Governor Whitmer recently mandated the closure of many types of businesses, but allowed golf courses to keep the fields of play open and their maintenance operations to continue unabated.

We are all in this together. The golf course and turfgrass industries in Louisiana support the Governor's Office and we sincerely appreciate your efforts to help contain COVID-19. We recognize that public safety is paramount and all of your recent decisions are weighted with that in mind. We hope you will endorse our interpretation to continue to perform these essential functions within our communities.

Governor Edwards, thank you again for your leadership during these challenging times. We wish you the very best as you exercise judgment and wisdom to both protect and advance our great state.

We look forward to your reply and invite your office to contact us at any time to clarify our concerns listed above.

Sincerely,

Logan Ray, Executive Director
Louisiana Golf Association

Robert Brown, Executive Director/CEO
Gulf States PGA

Brandon Reese, Director: Golf Course Maintenance Operations, TPC Louisiana
Louisiana-Mississippi Golf Course Superintendents Association

Greg Klemp, General Manager/COO, Money Hill Golf & Country Club
Club Managers Association of America

