



June 6,

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### 2005 US Open Golfers to Share the Course with Endangered Woodpecker

Endangered birds and birdies are things that are hard to come by on most golf courses. That is unless you happen to be at Pinehurst in the Sandhills of North Carolina during the U.S. Open June 13 through 19. While some of the best golfers in the world are teeing off, in the long-leaf pine trees that line the course red-cockaded woodpeckers will be busy feeding their young before they fledge from the nest.

In May 2005, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Environmental Defense recognized Pinehurst Resort for being the first private landowner in the country to sign-up in what 10 years ago was a new and innovative program to protect the endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers. The program is called "Safe Harbor."

After Pinehurst's landmark agreement in 1995, landowners in the Sandhills starting entering the program. Today there are 91 landowner agreements in place providing habitat that supports 56 groups of red-cockaded woodpeckers. The program went nation-wide in 1999, and today more than 320 private landowners across the United States have enrolled their lands to conserve and protect 35 endangered and threatened species. Almost 3.6 million acres of private land and 16 linear miles of stream are enrolled in the Safe Harbor Program

"Pinehurst Resort was the first private landowner to sign up," said Brad Kocher, Vice-President Grounds and Golf Course Management. "We are proud that we can do something for the survival of the red-cockaded woodpecker," he said. "Being in the program really has not changed a whole lot of what we do around here in our daily operation," he continued. "It has made us more aware that if we do certain management practices here at Pinehurst Resort we will enhance the species."

Since its enrollment, the numbers of birds at the Pinehurst Resort have increased. "From what we have observed, the birds that have grown up on the golf course do not seem to mind the everyday activity that goes with keeping the grounds in pristine condition," said Pete Campbell, biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

After a landowner agrees to the terms of Safe Harbor and signs up for the program, they can become eligible for management assistance and in some cases monetary assistance through other habitat management program both private and federal. And, now instead of suffering penalties under the ESA the landowner is rewarded and assisted by endangered species on their land.

The USFWS is the federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 fish and wildlife management offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces wildlife laws, administers the ESA, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to State fish and wildlife agencies.

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#### NOTE TO EDITORS:

- **Four minutes of B-roll (Beta format) is available of the Red-cockaded woodpecker.**
- **Tour of sites by USFWS will be available by RCW subject matter experts.**
- **Websites on Safe Harbor: <http://endangered.fws.gov/recovery/harborqa.pdf> <http://www.backfromthebrink.org/> or [http://www.pinehurst.com/us\\_open.asp](http://www.pinehurst.com/us_open.asp)**
- **Photographs/jpegs are available.**
- **Contact Patty Matteson to arrange tours or for further information - (919) 856-4520) or 523-8809 (mobile).**