

Case Study of Sag Hollow Golf Club

Keys to Success



Project Description



Economic Value




Challenges & Advice



Benefits



Stewardship Meaning

 Owsley County is a rural area with 4,000 residents and little industry. For that reason, community leaders in Booneville thought economic development was needed to bring jobs to their town, giving residents an opportunity to work in the town where they live. A group of citizens and business leaders decided that creating a golf course would be the wisest move. Despite some local opposition to the project, the group formed a 501C nonprofit economic development corporation and began their search for land. In 2004, they chose a former strip mine site and spent the next three years cleaning land that would be the home of Sag Hollow Golf Club.

Mine-scarred lands, such as this, are considered to be brownfields, which are properties that are contaminated or perceived to be. Two community-minded institutions in the county, Farmers State Bank and the Peoples Rural Telephone Cooperative, subsidized the project.

Opened in 2007, the Sag Hollow community consists of 125 acres, 50 of which make up the nine-hole golf course, which has nine championship tees and eight shorter tees. When 20 home lots surrounding the course were offered for sale, all were sold in 2.5 hours. More home lots are available now.

“No one understands what Sag Hollow Golf Club has meant to the community,” says Hughes. “It has created extra jobs for local people.”



The remains of the strip mine are now a productive golf community, bringing money, people and jobs into the county. Six homes have been built on the property, and two of the families moved in from other counties. Depending on the season, the club employs

from four to seven people and has 50 members.

The land was valued at \$150,000 when we bought it,” says Don Hughes, general manager of the course. “Now the estimated value of the golf course is \$1 million, with the six homes having an estimated value of \$1.2 million.”

Thousands of volunteer hours were

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donated to clear brush, move rocks and cover the shale with dirt for the grass to grow and to allow irrigation. Two ponds were excavated to create a water source, and a few trees had to be cut.

“The golf course is an ongoing project,” says Hughes. “We are in a constant state of improving or maintaining the property. We could have saved a lot of money by spending money at the beginning to do more research about the proper design of the course to minimize the maintenance.”

Green #3 had to be rebuilt, which cost \$20,000. Some sand traps had to be redone, and it was necessary to watch the runoff when it rained and sent water running down the hill onto the greens. These are things that will be taken into consideration before construction begins on the next nine holes.

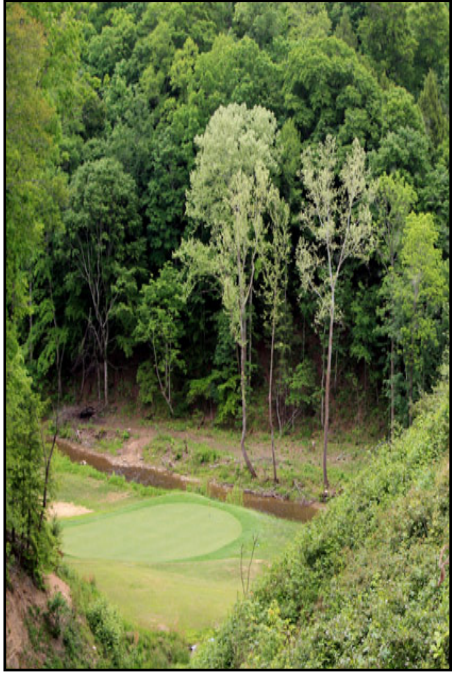


Sag Hollow Golf Clubhouse overlooks Hole # 2 in Booneville.

+ “No one understands what Sag Hollow Golf Club has meant to the community,” says Hughes. “It has created extra jobs for local people to build houses and work at the club. They have grabbed the opportunity to work here and stay in their home county.”

During construction, there were a few citizens who had doubts about a golf course being an asset to Booneville, but the golf community was built for economic development, and as time wore on, there was a real appreciation for and pride of Sag Hollow. The gravel county road was paved, and now people use the clubhouse for fundraisers, reunions, showers and other social events. The community is delighted to have Sag Hollow Golf Club in its midst.

“This is another form of recreation and exercise,” says Eric Mason, the director of Golf. “We also get a lot of beginners, including 30 kids that we once had in the youth league. The local high school uses the course, and the regional Class A golf tournament is held here. In June, 62 people from around the state came for the tournament. Our weekly golf scramble usually brings 40 people here.”



Located on the site of a former strip mine, Hole # 3 is a favorite.



The land that had once been unusable now has ponds stocked with fish; a golf course to teach the sport to local youth and provide recreation to residents and visitors; and landscaping with shrubs, flowers, trees and native grasses to add beauty and provide a habitat for a variety of wildlife. Families have built homes and moved into the golf community, boosting the local economy. Native Owsley Countians, such as Eric Mason, can work where they live and appreciate their surroundings.

HELPFUL HINT: Cleaning up and reusing brownfields can boost local economies and transform eyesores into places of beauty and function.