

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 15, 2015

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Todd Weber

920-457-4441 ext. 72707

[todd.weber@kohler.com](mailto:todd.weber@kohler.com)

## **Environmental Impact Adds Wetland, Reveals Dune Structures, Limits Invasive Species and Creates Public Access**

**KOHLER**, Wis. – Kohler Co. today filed with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for its proposed 18-hole public golf course in the Town of Wilson. The report documents how the project would remove invasive species, reintroduce native vegetation to increase biological and wildlife diversity and include a water protection plan.

The report – which is posted on the project website at [www.ProposedGolfCourse.com](http://www.ProposedGolfCourse.com) – also shows the course will enhance public access and route entrance traffic away from neighboring homes to the north. The EIR is a thorough, science- and engineering-based study that provides factual information on topics ranging from wetland and wildlife to traffic, economic benefit, water use and more.

Jim Richerson, Group Director of Golf for Kohler Co.'s Hospitality and Real Estate Group, said that due diligence, field work and planning have been guided by the principles of avoiding, minimizing or mitigating any potential impact to the environs. "The report confirms the company has been successful in meeting that standard, taking a minimal and balanced approach that will protect the environment while providing a major economic boost for the Town of Wilson and Sheboygan County," he said.

Kohler Co. has owned the proposed golf course property for more than 75 years. Current zoning allows for a golf course on the land, and the company is seeking a Conditional Use Permit from the Town of Wilson along with all required DNR permits. The EIR was prepared as one step in an extensive environmental review and approval process for the project, and includes design modifications that sharply reduce wetland impact and significantly decrease the amount of property needed for an easement on state land.

Highlights of the Environmental Impact Report include:

- **Net increase in wetland:** A golf course of minimalist design and an entrance from the south have reduced impacted wetland to less than five acres from more than 25 acres originally estimated. In addition, Kohler Co. would follow the state's mitigation program allowing the company to preserve additional area wetland resulting in a net increase of protected wetland.
- **Program to address invasive species:** There are plans to remove invasive species including the predominant Japanese barberry – a thorny tangle that makes parts of the site impenetrable and whose removal will allow the land to breathe. Native species and trees will be planted to enhance the natural habitat, increase wildlife diversity and transform parts of the site now classified as “degraded” into a healthier forest.
- **Sensitivity to specific species, plant and wildlife:** The golf course plan minimizes impact to special habitat or species of concern. Sound land management principles provide more protection for various species and naturally occurring ecosystems. Major dune structures are preserved. More than half of the wooded area will be left intact.
- **Protection of the watershed and groundwater, including a well-protection program:** Kohler Co. tested a number of options and found use of well water on the golf course property and creation of an irrigation pond for water supply to be the most environmentally sound approach. Analysis confirmed that a proper well system would not negatively impact the water table or groundwater. As a special insurance, Kohler Co. will set up a program to fund and rectify potential well issues for Town of Wilson residents. The plan will mirror the successful program of Whistling Straits in the Town of Mosel. The golf course will also use a sophisticated, computerized irrigation system with soil moisture sensors and daily inspections to reduce water use.
- **Minimal use of pesticides and fertilizers and prevention of runoff:** The course will feature grasses and plants that require minimal fertilization and use an integrated pest management program aimed at minimizing chemical pesticides. The EIR notes that in 2014, KOHLER golf courses on average applied fertilizers at only 20 percent of authorized state and federal levels on fairways. Kohler Co. has a proven record of best management practices regarding use of approved pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers on its golf courses, and its Sheboygan County courses have never been cited with an environmental violation. There will be no runoff of pesticides or fertilizers into the Black River or Lake Michigan.
- **Create public access:** There is no public access to this land today. Like Kohler Co.'s four other golf venues, this project will provide public access to golf and restaurant.

- **Sensitivity to history and archaeology:** Burial mounds located in a small concentrated section of the property will remain untouched. Analysis of the site's archaeology and history will continue.
- **Reduced impact to state park and enhanced public access:** The proposal affects approximately four acres of state parkland in an area already used by park staff for maintenance operations. This area is not normally accessed by the public, and the easement would follow a route similar to the one approved for a previous development proposal. No public trails would be affected. Additionally, plans call for the golf course and state park to share an expanded entry road at the south end of the property, steering traffic away from neighboring homes to the north. To improve circulation, Kohler Co. proposes to modify the state entrance road by adding a roundabout. Two lanes would be dedicated for entry to park visitors, while golf course traffic would be routed through the roundabout.
- **Minimal impact of traffic:** A traffic study showed that once the golf course opens, neighboring roads and intersections would continue to operate essentially at current levels of service. Other than the entrance, no major traffic improvements will be required, and the new entry will improve traffic flow.
- **Adoption of green building standards:** Clubhouse plans call for a design that will include timber and canvas-like features as primary elements. Environmentally sensitive design standards will be used to achieve eligibility for Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) green building certification.

The EIR also includes data from a February economic impact analysis by SB Friedman Development Advisors of Chicago. That study found that when fully operational, the project will create the equivalent of 227 new, full-time jobs, generate an annual \$20.6 million economic impact for Sheboygan County and boost the local tax base of the Town, school system and Sheboygan County. Construction-related activity would bring an additional boost for the County, with construction alone estimated to create the equivalent of 95 full-time jobs and generate \$12.5 million annually over the three-year duration of the project.

"The facts and data contained in the EIR confirm Kohler Co.'s commitment to enhancing, protecting and nurturing the land by taking a careful and thoughtful approach," Richerson said. "Our record at Whistling Straits, Blackwolf Run, River Wildlife Land Preserve, as well as our corporate headquarters and facilities worldwide demonstrate our commitment and belief that good business and environmental responsibility are interwoven. The EIR contains the science and facts to back that up. We look forward to continuing our work to make this a magnificent recreational facility respectful of the forest and dunes and open to the public."

###