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Kohler Co.'s revised Sheboygan County golf course plan reduces impact on wetlands

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Kohler Co. submitted revised plans Wednesday morning for its proposed championship golf course it wants to build immediately north of Kohler-Andrae State Park in the town of Wilson in Sheboygan County. The revisions show a greatly reduced impact on wetlands.

The company applied in spring 2014 to the town of Wilson for a conditional use permit for the proposed 18-hole golf course, which would be built on 247 acres of Kohler-owned forestland along Lake Michigan and use a portion of Kohler-Andrae State Park.

The proposal has spurred vocal opposition from town of Wilson residents, who have raised concerns about pesticides, bird populations and the course's impact on nearby neighborhoods.

The updated course design submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources reduces direct wetlands impact from 25 acres to 3.69 acres and protects rare interdunal wetlands. The design updates involve adjustments for some holes and other features, said project spokesman [Jim Richerson](#).

He said the changes are based on further design review, public feedback from hearings and other comments on the golf course proposal. The goal is to develop a world-class course that protects the natural environs, removes invasive species and opens private land to public use, he said.

"Our company has owned this land for more than 75 years," Richerson said. "We care what happens here, which is why the principles of avoiding, minimizing and mitigating potential impacts have guided our efforts from the start. It's clear there is a lot of excitement about our plans, and public input has helped us identify enhancements – such as leaving the interdunal wetlands completely untouched – that will make our project even better."

In addition to the design updates, Richerson said Kohler Co. is offering a wetland mitigation plan to restore and enhance additional ridge and swale wetlands in the same watershed as the project.

“This mitigation plan provides an opportunity to go beyond our project to increase protected wetlands in Sheboygan County, ultimately resulting in a net increase of protected wetlands in the region,” Richerson said. “Our company has always believed that good business and environmental sustainability go hand-in-hand.”

A town of Wilson official could not be reached for comment.

Kohler executives must now wait for DNR officials to review the updated plans and decide whether to issue a permit. If it is granted, the company would then need to go back to the town of Wilson for approval.

An economic development study commissioned by Kohler in 2016 found that the golf course would create 227 full-time jobs and generate an annual economic impact of \$20.6 million.

The study, performed by SB Friedman Development Advisors in Chicago, estimates that the golf course's three-year construction phase would create 95 full-time construction jobs and have a \$12.5 million economic impact on Sheboygan County. Kohler Co. says it will make an initial investment of \$25 million to build and develop the golf course.

Kohler already operates four golf courses in Sheboygan County, including Whistling Straits and Blackwolf Run, which have hosted several PGA championships.

<http://www.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/news/2017/03/08/kohler-co-s-revised-sheboygan-county-golf-course.html>