

## “GREEN” AIRFIELD TURFGRASS TAKES FLIGHT



Constant mowing of airfield turfgrass is costly and generates excessive fuel emissions. **Christina Kobland** envisioned a better way, **FlightTurf®**, a patent-pending turfgrass vegetation management system that is revolutionizing airfield management and could save airports significant dollars in the process.

“I hated seeing airports waste dollars in trying to deter geese and other wildlife,” says Kobland, president of Native Return® LLC which specializes in using native plants to restore balance to declining ecosystems. “It makes more sense to plant a vegetative cover that wildlife would avoid, rather than trying to manage geese after they entered the airfield.”

Based on Kobland’s years of research on airfields—including, among others, Philadelphia Division of Aviation’s Northeast Philadelphia Airport—this turfgrass and vegetative management system requires only one mow a year to maintain an average height of six inches.

“Reduced mowing eliminates the disturbances such as the flush of insects, mutilation of small animals and production of hay, all of which would otherwise attract wildlife,” says Kobland.

FlightTurf meets FAA specifications. The Pennsylvania Bureau of Aviation supports its use as well.

### MULTIPLE ADVANTAGES

Mowing requirement reductions alone result in major economic advantages. Assuming a low 2010 fuel cost of \$2.10 per gallon and 22 mows a year for conventional grass, estimated annual savings with FlightTurf average \$800 per acre. For an airport the size of

**Philadelphia International (PHL)**, with 870 mowable acres, that translates into an annual savings of \$696,000. “These figures don’t even take into account the potential reduction in wildlife management expenses,” says Kobland. Less wildlife means fewer runway interruptions and safer conditions. With fewer mowing crews, airports tighten security and risk exposure—and reduce capital

costs for mowing equipment.

“With FlightTurf, greenhouse gas emissions attributable to mowing are reduced 95 percent,” Kobland says. “What’s more, the deeper root structure of FlightTurf reduces stormwater runoff and reduces or eliminates the need for watering or fertilization.”

A new installation of FlightTurf is competitively priced compared to a standard seeding installation, because FlightTurf requires less fertilization and liming. “When replacing a traditional stand of turfgrass with FlightTurf, an airport can recover its conversion costs in two to four years,” Kobland says.

Recently **Erie International Airport** included 92 acres of FlightTurf in its AIP runway extension project. “I saw no downside to using FlightTurf,” says **Chris Rodgers**, executive director at Erie International. “If it reduces mowing and deters wildlife, great. If it doesn’t, we are no further behind than we would be with the usual turfgrass.”

Find out more at [www.FlightTurf.com](http://www.FlightTurf.com) or call 610-834-7848. ✈

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