GEO Certified®

Voluntary International Certification Standard – Golf Facilities

Introduction

This document presents the GEO Certified® Certification Standard in a format that supports:

- Applicants for the GEO Certified® ecolabel as they seek to drive ongoing sustainability performance.
- Independent accredited verifiers as they evaluate the performance of GEO Certified® clubs.
- Other groups and individuals seeking to understand the minimum requirements for award of the GEO Certified® sustainability assurance.
- The **'must'** requirements are mandatory, and applicants are expected to demonstrate credible activity across **'should'** criteria.
- Across all management areas, legal compliance with applicable national or international regulations is mandatory.
- A fundamental requirement to achieve the GEO Certified® ecolabel is positive, proactive participation.
- Criteria are weighted and applied to individual circumstances as golf facility performance is evaluated.
- Specific criteria points may not be applicable to individual facility circumstances.
- Short, medium and long-term sustainability aims and objectives are expected of all GEO Certified® golf facilities, making visible progress throughout periods of certification.

GEO is a stakeholder-funded, not-for-profit organization, dedicated to helping the global golf community establish leadership in environmental and social enhancement and corporate responsibility.

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NATURE

As large green spaces that often feature diverse habitats, all golf facilities should contribute to ecosystem protection and enhancement, and the maintenance of healthy, living landscapes.

Golf courses have the potential to improve the quality of air, water and soils. Attention to detail in the management of waste-water, hazardous materials and pollution prevention are critical elements in safeguarding environmental quality.

Integrated pest management (IPM) is an approach to the management of weeds, pests and diseases in order to provide a suitable quality turfgrass surface without threatening the health and safety of people or the environment.

Must

- Demonstrate a sound understanding of the ecological and landscape value of the site.
- Be aware of conservation designations for protected sites, habitats, species or landscapes.
- Be able to explain why the grass species being maintained is most appropriate, and minimizes the requirements of water, fertilizer, pesticides and other resource inputs.
- Demonstrate practical measures taken to identify and minimize the required areas of managed turfgrass.
- Provide annual data for fertilizer and pesticide use.
- Demonstrate an integrated approach to turf management (IPM) that minimizes fertilizer, pesticide and other resource inputs.
- Identify where all waste water and runoff goes after leaving the property and demonstrate appropriate treatment in accordance with legal requirements.
- Maintain a register of all hazardous substances.
- Demonstrate legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances.

- Demonstrate measures undertaken to prevent pollution from the maintenance facility, clubhouse and golf course.

Should

- Monitor the status of key species as a measure of environmental quality.
- Establish a schedule for extending and updating ecological surveys.
- Enlist targeted advice from ecological, biodiversity and landscape experts.
- Demonstrate practical habitat management and species conservation activities to increase biodiversity and ecological value.
- Communicate regularly with members and visitors around intensive course maintenance and activities affecting playing quality.
- Undertake visual, biological and/or chemical sampling of water quality at regular intervals.
- Demonstrate that water quality is not adversely affected by management operations.

RESOURCES

Water is one of the most critical management issues for golf facilities. Regardless of location and climate, it is important to demonstrate a responsible approach to water management in terms of consumption and the quality of water.

To operate efficiently and minimize carbon dioxide emissions and climate change impacts, golf facilities should demonstrate that they are diversifying their energy supply and working to improve resource efficiency.

All golf facilities can use their purchasing power to improve the sustainability of their supply chain and management of waste. By expressing a preference for more sustainable materials and suppliers, positive social and environmental benefits can be widely multiplied.

Must

- Provide total annual figures for all water consumed, separated by different management areas (clubhouse, golf course, maintenance facility).
- State sources of water used.
- Demonstrate practical measures in irrigation efficiency by targeting essential playing surfaces only and reducing the areas applied to
- Ensure irrigation water recycled from treated effluent / sewage / grey-water sources etc, meets necessary legal requirements of chemical and biological quality.
- Demonstrate irrigation system maintenance, servicing and upgrading.
- Demonstrate practical measures to minimize water consumption in clubhouses, maintenance facilities and other golf operations buildings.
- Provide total annual figures for all energies and fuels consumed, broken down by renewable and non-renewable sources.
- State the total number of operational vehicles (maintenance and club) under ownership or control.

- Provide an overview of local to international suppliers, covering major categories of product and service.
- Have an established ethical / environmental purchasing policy.
- State all current waste streams and waste management operations.
- Demonstrate legal compliance in waste management.

Should

- Demonstrate efforts to diversify irrigation water sources, and move away from the use of high-quality public supplies.
- Audit energy use and / or have an energy resource management plan outlining opportunities for efficiency and diversification to renewable sources of electricity and 'cleaner' fuels / gases.
- Report energy and resource consumption as a carbon and / or ecological footprint.
- Undertake practical actions to improve energy efficiency and reduce consumption throughout the facility.
- Transition to more fuel-efficient, low-carbon, electric / hybrid vehicles and course maintenance equipment.
- Demonstrate practical activities towards reducing vehicle use among staff and customers.
- Provide evidence of an ethical / environmental purchasing policy in action and practical examples within the supply chain.
- Demonstrate measures undertaken to avoid waste, and to continue the lifecycle of materials through reuse and recycling.

COMMUNITY

Golf facilities bring together people and businesses within local communities, as well as provide an important connection to the local environment. Golf facilities can deliver valuable socio-economic and environmental benefits and act as advocates for sustainability.

Must

- Maintain a register of full and part time employees, including all staff roles and responsibilities.
- Have a sustainability working group / committee comprising key staff and members, volunteers, or external advisors.
- Not have any legal disputes affecting the site, and openly declare any controversy or conflict related to the facility or its business activities.
- Demonstrate measures to engage positively and constructively with neighbours, the local community and other organizations.
- Demonstrate internal communications relating to sustainability issues.
- Maintain information on any historical, cultural or archaeological designations and features that apply to the site.

Should

- Demonstrate formal or informal sustainability education of employees.
- Demonstrate measures undertaken to provide appropriate diversified land use, access and other recreational opportunities for non-golfers.
- Establish dialogue with agencies related to the historical, cultural and archaeological context of the site.
- Demonstrate measures undertaken to conserve and / or interpret the cultural, historical and archaeological interest of the site.