2019 Waste Management Phoenix Open

TPC Scottsdale, AZ

GEO Certified® Tournament Report

January 2020
1. Introduction

GEO Foundation is delighted to recognize the 2019 Waste Management Phoenix Open as a GEO Certified® Tournament, becoming the first tournament to achieve the award three years in a row.

The 2019 Waste Management Phoenix Open was held from January 31st to February 3rd 2019, hosted by the Phoenix Thunderbirds philanthropic organisation and the title sponsor Waste Management. The tournament was held in Scottsdale, Arizona, at TPC Scottsdale, a GEO Certified® facility. It is the best-attended golf tournament in the world, welcoming hundreds of thousands of fans annually to the Valley of the Sun for the 'Greatest Show on Grass'.

Since 2012, the WMPO has run a Zero Waste Challenge, aiming to divert 100% of waste from landfill. Additionally, extensive community and stakeholder outreach, as well as charitable giving and strong tournament legacy, have been pillars of the sustainability program. In the year preceding the 2019 tournament, $12.2 million was donated to 71 local charities, demonstrating the scale of WMPO’s philanthropical and charitable operations. The depth and duration of the event’s focus on sustainability is hugely commendable and currently unprecedented across golf tournaments globally.

As a result of these and other concerted team efforts, building over a number of years and with concrete commitments to the future, the Waste Management Phoenix Open has:

- Met all the required criteria of golf’s voluntary standard for sustainable golf tournaments
- Successfully passed through the official verification process undertaken by the Council for Responsible Sport (CRS)
- Successfully passed the GEO Certified® evaluation.

GEO concurs with the Council for Responsible Sport’s verification assessment and opinion that, having achieved 50 out of the 50 credits sought, and with Continual Improvement Points set for the future, the Waste Management Phoenix Open should be awarded GEO Certified® Tournament status for the 2019 event.

With this certification, the 2019 Waste Management Phoenix Open has reinforced and strengthened its position as a credible and important leader in advancing sustainability in and through golf – helping foster nature, conserve resources and strengthen communities. Furthermore, the tournament continues to support and showcase sustainability in front of a large international audience.

This official GEO Certified® Tournament Report summarises the commitments made, actions undertaken, results generated, and continual improvement points accepted for future editions of the tournament.

“Three consecutive years of certification goes to show how consistently the WMPO has planned, implemented and continually improved its sustainability initiatives and policies over the years. Not only has the tournament demonstrated credible leadership in golf, but the WMPO serves as a great example of how all large-scale events can act responsibly and sustainably – reducing strain on resources and climate impacts, and providing tangible benefits for the community.”

Jonathan Smith, Executive Director, GEO Foundation
2. Verification

The official tournament audit and verification process was carried out by the independent verification body the Council for Responsible Sport, accredited by GEO Foundation for golf tournament verification in North America.

Verification involved the following activities, using the International Sustainable Tournament Standard as the guide to ensure comprehensive and consistent evaluation of performance:

- Pre-event assessment of submitted tournament documents
- On-site, event-time verification of policies in practice and results
- Post-event evaluation of 2019 tournament data and results.

The Council then submitted a full verification report for evaluation by GEO Certification Ltd, a subsidiary of GEO Foundation.

About the Council for Responsible Sport

The Council’s vision is a world where responsibly produced sports events are the norm and its mission is to provide objective, independent verification of the socially and environmentally responsible work event organisers are doing, and to actively support event organizers who strive to make a difference in their communities.

The Council first offered third-party certification of event production practices according to a stakeholder-reviewed collection of sport-industry best practice standards in 2007. As of October 2019, 175 individual events have achieved certification in eight countries and 27 U.S. States.

GEO is proud to work with the Council for Responsible Sport. We have a shared vision and mission, which combines to offer golf tournaments the most effective pathway to credible recognition.

Find out more about the Council at http://www.councilforresponsiblesport.org

GEO Certification review

GEO undertook a full review of all tournament and verification materials and evidence, ensuring:

- Comprehensiveness – that activities undertaken touched on all elements of the Tournaments Standard
- Consistency – that the verification approach was balanced, well-weighted and with consistent depth of evaluation across criteria
- Accuracy - matching the verification report with evidence submitted by the tournament to ensure statements and claims were accurate.
3. **Best practices and Highlights**

Sustainability was implemented in a planned and coordinated way across all key elements of event staging, and in line with the GEO tournament certification criteria.

A wide range of actions spanned the following sustainability action areas:

1. Planning
2. Site protection
3. Procurement
4. Resource management
5. Access and equity
6. Communications
7. Legacy

The highlights and best practices that were carried out across each of these areas are summarized below.
3.1 Planning

The Waste Management Phoenix Open (WMPO) sustainability programmes are led by the highest level of commitment, emanating from Waste Management National Services, Inc. and the tournament host, the Thunderbirds, and fully supported by the tournament staging and organizing teams.

The communal goal is to stage the ‘greenest show on grass’, a strong claim which is backed up by policies and initiatives spanning the entire range of sustainability issues.

“Waste Management have provided the golf and events industry one of the best examples of an operationally-integrated title sponsorship that helps all parties achieve their respective goals.”

Shelley Villalobos,
Lead verifier for the 2019 WMPO Council for Responsible Sport

“Waste management and the Thunderbirds are extremely proud of this achievement. Becoming the first tournament to maintain the GEO Certified® status for three years validates our comprehensive sustainability program and commitment to continually improving.”

Chance Cozby
Big Chief, The Thunderbirds
3.2 Site Protection

TPC Scottsdale is a 36-hole public golf resort that sits in the McDowell foothills of the Sonoran Desert. The management team have shown a strong commitment to sustainability initiatives, with an extensive Turf Management and Environmental Management Plan. The facility achieved GEO Certified® status in 2018, demonstrating its commitment to sustainability, and befitting its role as the venue for the ‘greenest show on grass’.

**Highlights**

- 50% of the site is native desert landscape
- 15.2 acres of important wetland habitat
- Planting of aquatic species to improve water quality and minimize erosion
- Water in the lakes is reclaimed effluent from the City of Scottsdale
- Weather station, soil moisture probes, moisture meters and salinity sensors for efficient irrigation
- Lighting timers throughout maintenance facility and course restrooms
- Recycling of used oil and filters, battery cores, used tires, cans, plastic bottles and containers
- Winner of GCSAA ELGA award
- Audubon International Signature Course
- GEO Certified® facility.

**Best Practices**

- Wildlife and plant species inventoried and mapped
- Wildlife and habitat preservation
- Integrated pest management
- Chemical-use reduction activities
- Resource conservation
- Water management.
3.3 Procurement

Strong efforts were made to ensure that the products and materials supplied to the tournament were as sustainable as possible. Robust purchasing guidelines and a policy for acceptable materials were put in place by the tournaments organisers, requiring that all materials used at the tournament were reusable, recyclable, or compostable.

The procurement policies were enforced across all aspects of tournament operations. During the event, staff were assigned to monitor concessionaires and hospitality areas and make sure that the requirements for acceptable materials were met. Daily check-ins and volunteer training were organised at concession stands to identify and correct any misunderstandings about the products and materials that were allowed.

**Sustainable procurement overview:**

- All materials used at concessions stands must be compostable, including paper towels, cups, plates, bowls, food containers, knives and forks, utensils, etc.
- Tournament materials are reused wherever possible, for example signage and golf balls from water features
- Sourcing from suppliers and manufacturers using recycled materials (e.g. signage-production) as much as possible
- Food donation program to minimise food waste
- All promotional items and giveaways are sourced responsibly, e.g. certified organic, made from recycled materials, and recyclable
- On-site vendors are engaged in sustainability initiatives and must agree to meet the policy for acceptable materials.

**Highlight**

140,000 recovered golf balls were used to create floating signage in one of the water features at TPC Scottsdale! This helped promote zero waste efforts at the tournament and was picked up and broadcast on the Golf Channel.
3.4 Resource Management
With close involvement from the title sponsor, Waste Management, resource management was at the heart of the 2019 WMPO’s operations. Strong initiatives were in place not only for waste, but also for other important resources, such as energy and water.

Waste
The Zero Waste Challenge has been a recurring feature at the WMPO since 2012. Building on previous years, at the 2019 event, an incredible 99.4% of all materials that entered the tournament site were diverted from landfill. This was thanks to meticulous efforts across planning, procurement, waste separation, fan and vendor engagement, tracking and monitoring.

Highlight
Empty wine bottles were collected early in tournament week, turned into high-end reusable glasses and gifted to WM Sustainability Forum attendees and clients.

Energy and Carbon
Major events like the WMPO can have a significant negative impact on the environment through the use of energy and its associated carbon emissions. The following steps were taken to minimise these impacts at the 2019 WMPO:

- 100% of event carbon emissions were offset in partnership with Envirofit International
- 100% of grid electricity used during the tournament was powered by renewable energy sources
- Alternative fuel and energy types were used wherever possible, for example in biodiesel generators and shuttle buses, hybrid vehicles, and solar-powered trash compactors and lighting towers.

“Zero waste is an extraordinary feat for an event of this size (one of the largest annual events in the world). The Waste Management Phoenix Open continues to demonstrate industry-leading capabilities in balancing the triple-bottom-lines of people, economics and the environment with regards to materials management. With a particularly strong supplier and stakeholder engagement program, the event has become a key example of the successes to be gained through genuine and ongoing collaboration.”

Shelley Villalobos, Lead verifier for the 2019 WMPO Council for Responsible Sport
Water
The tournament organisers put in place a Water Conservation and Restoration Plan covering the following areas:

- On-site conservation - reduction of water use and diversion from municipal sources, e.g. by using hand sanitizers instead of water and reuse of grey water from catering operations to flush portable toilets
- Restoration - financial support for water restoration in the Colorado River Basin and Verde River through Bonneville Environmental Foundation (BEF). BEF is one of the beneficiaries of ‘Green Out Day’ during tournament week. Since the beginning of this partnership, 270 million gallons of water have been restored
- Water data tracking – all water usage and sources are carefully tracked each year, allowing progress to be monitored. This information is made public in Waste Management’s WMPO Sustainability Report.

In partnership with BEF, educational installations were located onsite to promote water conservation and educate fans about its importance.
3.5 Access and Equity
The WMPO is known by golf fans around the world as an event with an incomparable atmosphere and experience. Every effort was made to make the 2019 WMPO as accessible and equitable as possible, so that anyone can enjoy the tournament’s magic.

Best practices:

- Employee and volunteer training about sustainability efforts and equity
- Extensive volunteer opportunities for a wide range of groups
- Comprehensive security plan, rules, and procedures in place
- FAQs about security and golf etiquette available to fans
- Access options for disabled spectators provided
- Plan in place to increase participation of underrepresented groups (e.g. military veterans and youths)
- Close cooperation and engagement with local community and neighbourhood groups.

Highlights
Admittance was free to all fans on the first two tournament days, reducing financial barriers to attendance. For veterans, active military personnel, and their families, entrance was free throughout the week.

The First Tee Dream Days provided students from local school with the opportunity to practice golf with the pros, get behind the scenes tours, act as caddies to help raise monies, and enjoy educational activities during the tournament. Other students, participating in the Standard Bearer Program, got up close to the action. They joined a group of competitors for one of their rounds and were responsible for the sign displaying the scores.
3.6 Communications

A comprehensive pre-, during and post-event communications strategy was used, addressing the key topics of sustainability, including nature conservation, recycling, charitable and community support, transport, water conservation and more.

Communications ensured multiple levels of interaction with the public, some to inform, others to involve and others to inspire. A range of media was used for these purposes: web, press, social, print and on-site signage, to ensure exposure and accessibility to all interested groups (local community, general public, attendees, NGO’s, residents, etc).

Highlights:
- Fan involvement in charitable giving – on ‘Green Out Day’ Thunderbirds makes a donation for every spectator wearing green
- Educational videos about resources management at the WMPO aired on the Golf Channel
- Onsite educational campaigns e.g. volunteer run Zero Waste Stations and Water Installations
- The Waste Management Sustainability Forum was held during the tournament, bringing together business, government, innovators and experts to exchange ideas and insights about sustainability.

Best Practices:
- Fan signage and information on walkways to protect habitats
- Press releases
- Sustainability report
- Web and social media presence before and during the event
- Charity partnerships and promotions to fans
- With large visitor numbers, communications with the local community were extensive
- Strong partnerships with other organizations to create multiple layers of sustainability messaging.
3.7 Legacy

The Thunderbirds, hosts of the WMPO, is a community group with a mission to raise and provide direct financial support to Phoenix-based charities, so that they may acquire and develop new community infrastructure, including support services for those living below the poverty line.

All tournament proceedings are donated by the Thunderbirds to many local charities. In 2018, $12.2 million was donated to 71 local organizations. Beneficiaries included the Phoenix Children’s Hospital, Barrow Neurological Foundation, and the United Food Bank. Similar donations followed the 2019 edition of the tournament.

Fans at the 2019 WMPO were engaged in the charitable giving through events including Green Out Day, when a donation is made for everybody wearing green. The Birdies for Charity program provided another engaging way for fans to pledge charitable donations and allowed even more charities to benefit from the tournament in comparison to previous years.

A Special Olympics Putting challenge was also organised, giving disabled athletes the chance to showcase their skills and raising money for the Special Olympic movement.

Besides extensive charitable giving, the WMPO also has a significant impact on the local economy. A 2017 economic impact, commissioned by the Thunderbirds, and performed by the WP Carey School of Business, Arizona State University, identified that the Waste Management Phoenix Open inputted $389 million into Arizona’s economy.
4. **Continual Improvement Points**

The concept of continual improvement, innovation and setting new and higher targets is an important aspect of GEO Certified® Tournaments and reflects the tournament’s commitment to continue to extend on a year by year basis.

The following Continual Improvement Points were identified:

3.1 – **Produce a Procurement Policy and Plan** - Seek information regarding the practice of printing pairing sheets, program guides, and other printed tournament information on ‘FSC Certified’ and/or 100% recycled paper as a matter of protocol.

3.3 – **Re-Use Materials** - Review and engage companies from which the scrim, mesh, and carpet are purchased. Identify their own efforts to incorporate recycled materials into their products, and/or pursue Cradle to Cradle certification©, which could help effectively ‘close the loop’ for another key aspect of annual procurement making the tournament still more circular from a materials perspective.

4.6 – **Measure Water Consumption** - The tournament reported consuming 29,008 gallons more of fresh, metered water in 2019 than in 2018, an increase of 52% over the 2018 total. Seek to identify why this substantial increase in freshwater use occurred and whether it can be stemmed in 2020.

4.9 – **Produce Energy & Carbon Management Plan** - Consider offering further/more detailed guidance to all major contracting entities and delivery partners on ways to save energy and minimize its use (e.g. always hook carts up to grid energy before a generator). Some generators were running in the late afternoon and it wasn’t clear if they were needed at those times (unstaffed areas) potentially a ‘no idling’ policy could eliminate unnecessary generator/fuel usage. Non-idling also prevents noise pollution from generators on course.

4.12 – **Promote Public Transport and Other Low Carbon Travel** - Consider seeking Valley Metro’s support in creating a WMPO specific transit guide that can be available on the WMPO and Visit Scottsdale websites in the lead-up to the event. The guide could feature VM’s ‘Trip Planner’ assistance tool (https://www.valleymetro.org/trip-planner) and encourage (or even somehow incentivize) fans to use Valley Metro transit options during event weekend.
5. About GEO and Sustainability in and through Golf

GEO Foundation is an international not-for-profit organisation entirely dedicated to advancing sustainability in and through golf, collaborating with the golf industry worldwide to:

 ✓ Strengthen the social and environmental contribution of golf
 ✓ Help the sport credibly communicate its commitment and value
 ✓ Champion sustainability in front of a large audience.

GEO manages and assures the OnCourse® program for facility and course management, new golf development and tournaments – currently used in 76 countries worldwide.

In addition to the delivery of programs and solutions, GEO’s wider activities include research and innovation, communications and reporting, and support for strategy and policy.

GEO also administers GEO Certified®, the international mark of credible and comprehensive sustainability in golf, and part of an elite group of well-known ecolabels which include Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, and Forest Stewardship Council. After completing OnCourse®, a golf facility, development or tournament can apply for this international distinction.

Join OnCourse® - for sustainability, climate action and golf’s future!