



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report Levi Golf & Country Club

Prepared by independent verifier Pentti Viluksela

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2025
Recertification due: 2028



“Levi Golf & Country Club proves that with dedication and expertise a golf course can successfully co-exist with nature in demanding circumstances. The course is carefully managed with respect for the boreal environment, and winter survival of the playing surfaces is optimised through continuously testing different grass species. The Club is closely integrated with the local community by, for example, sharing the clubhouse/restaurant with the ski resort, providing outdoor sports opportunities to the public and running a successful junior golf programme. I look forward to seeing the results of an updated nature and habitat survey and a communication plan to inform golfers and other stakeholders about the environmental work, and to encourage them to take part in the sustainability activities.”

Pentti Viluksela
(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Levi Golf & Country Club has successfully achieved GEO Certified® status for its outstanding work to foster nature, conserve resources and support the community.

GEO Certified® is the most respected certification for golf, based on a credibly and transparently developed modern sustainability Standard of best practice.

Levi Golf & Country Club has:

1. Met the required certification criteria for sustainable golf operations
2. Successfully completed the official third-party verification process
3. Successfully passed the final evaluation by GEO Certification Ltd. (autonomous subsidiary of GEO Foundation)

GEO agreed with the conclusions of the official verification report, that, having achieved all mandatory criteria; and with specific Continual Improvement Points (CIP) set for the future and Critical CIP's (CCIPs) to be reviewed at recertification, Levi Golf & Country Club should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Levi Golf & Country Club can therefore claim a position as a leader in advancing sustainability in golf – making important contributions in protecting nature, conserving resources and strengthening communities.

The GEO Certified® Report that follows comments on the actions undertaken against the criteria, as observed by the independent verifier during the assurance process.

Certification is nearly always the result of a dedicated team effort resulting in many practical and valuable social and environmental results around the golf course, maintenance facility and clubhouse. These dedication and leadership qualities are an important part of ensuring the resilience of the golf facility and the golf industry into the future and also as part of society's wider effort to pull together for people and planet.

We congratulate all involved.

Jonathan Smith
Founder and Executive Director, GEO Foundation
GEO Certification Ltd. Board Member

Kelli Jerome
Executive Director, GEO Foundation

Carole Kerrey
Director, Certification and Credibility,
GEO Certification Ltd.



Verification and Certification

Verification

The official third-party audit was carried out by an independent verifier, accredited by GEO to undertake verifications of golf facilities applying for certification.

Verification involves reviewing practices and data, using the International Voluntary Standard for Sustainable Golf Operations as the guide to ensure comprehensive and consistent evaluation of performance. A detailed verification report is submitted for evaluation by GEO Certification Ltd, a subsidiary of GEO Foundation.

Certification

GEO Certification Ltd, an autonomous subsidiary of GEO Foundation [both not-for-profit entities], undertook a full review of all content submitted through the OnCourse® online platform and the report submitted by the verifier, ensuring:

- Comprehensiveness – activities undertaken touched on all elements of the Standard
- Consistency – that the verification approach was balanced, well weighted and with consistent depth of evaluation across each theme
- Accuracy - matching the verification report with evidence submitted by the golf facility to ensure statements and claims were accurate

GEO Foundation is an international not-for-profit founded to advocate, support and reward sustainability in and through golf. Over more than ten years, the group has worked collaboratively with dozens of golf industry associations and government and non-government organisations around the world, to help golf become a sustainability leader, striving for a net positive social and environmental impact. In addition to managing and assuring GEO Certified®, GEO Foundation also provides a suite of credible, practical programmes for golf facility management, new golf developments and golf tournaments called OnCourse®, often delivered in partnership with national golf bodies. Find out more at www.sustainable.golf

Credibility

GEO Certified® is part of the ISEAL Alliance, a group of the world's foremost credible certification systems including Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, Forest Stewardship Council, Marine Stewardship Council and many others. GEO Foundation earned and retains full membership of the ISEAL Alliance global association following a rigorous evaluation against the ISEAL Codes of Credibility in Sustainability Standards and Certification. The ISEAL Codes cover standard-setting, assurance, and monitoring and evaluation. Find out more at www.isealalliance.org



Verifier's Report

The Sustainability Agenda for golf covers the following themes and action areas:

THEMES	ACTION AREAS
Nature	• Habitats & Biodiversity • Turfgrass management • Pollution prevention
Resources	• Water • Energy • Materials
Community	• Partnerships & Outreach • Golfing & Employment • Advocacy & Communications

Included below are the observations made by the Independent Verifier against each item in the Standard.

NATURE			
N1 Habitats and Biodiversity			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
N1.1 Understand the site and surroundings	N1.1.1 Sound understanding of the nature and landscape value of the site	General knowledge of the wildlife and habitats on the site	Levi is the northernmost golf course in Finland. The botanical survey of the site is extensive and well documented. CCIP: Please undertake a survey for animal species (birds, mammals, etc.) and habitats. Highlight: Reindeers forage on the site and have right of way.
	N1.1.2 Knowledge of legal designations for protected areas, habitats and species	Identify rare, protected or endangered species found on the golf course; Understand legal responsibilities for landscape protection and special area designations, if applicable	No rare, protected or endangered species present. The Ounasjoki river, flowing by the eastern edge of the course, is a Natura 2000 designated area. There is approx. 15-metre buffer zone between the golf course and the river, specified in the planning permit.
	N1.1.3 Sound understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site, if applicable	There are no historical or cultural designations at the site.
N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the golf course	N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the required area of managed turfgrass	Monitor patterns of play to identify underutilised areas of turfgrass	There are many areas of native vegetation, e.g. pine woodland, between fairways. Some areas have been identified for possible naturalisation.
N1.3 Actively create and manage habitats for wildlife	N1.3.1 Projects to create and manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf	Prioritise native species of varying size and structure when planting Prioritise native trees and shrubs when planting Prioritise native aquatic species of varying size and structure when planting	The woodlands are carefully maintained to ensure air movement and support natural flora and fauna. A hole-by-hole 5-year development plan, covering both playability and nature aspects, is being updated. A 10-metre buffer zone around the Taalojärvi lake, smaller ponds and the Taalo-oja stream, running across the site to Ounasjoki river. This is specified in the planning permit.

		Establish mowing buffer zones next to water bodies and wetlands	
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species	Follow local best practice to protect or attract endangered, protected or rare species found on site	Bird nesting boxes have been built and set up in collaboration with the local environmental NGO Kittilän luonto.
N2 Turfgrass			
N2.1 Maintain optimum turfgrass and soil health	N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors	Select appropriate grass species for the climate	Highlight: Winter survival of turfgrass is a major concern in the boreal environment. Levi golf has tested different grass species for many years to identify those best suited to local conditions. <i>Poa supina</i> and <i>Festuca trichophylla</i> have been found most suitable on greens, and <i>poa supina/poa annua</i> on fairways. The club has adopted an IPM approach, and pesticides are only used after other methods have been tried.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition	No specific international requirement, however, identify course management and agronomic activities and look for continual improvements	Soil samples are regularly tested, and biostimulants are in use. Soil structure on greens and fairways is improved by aeration (slicing, coring) and topdressing.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Test and monitor soil pH; Follow legal requirements when timing fertiliser applications Ensure staff are fully qualified to use fertilisers Ensure staff use appropriate protective equipment Regularly calibrate and test applicators	Fertilising programme is drawn up based on soil samples and experience. Three staff members have Plant protection certification, overseen by the Finnish Safety and Chemicals Agency (Tukes). The sprayer is inspected every three years by an authorised agency and calibrated annually by staff. Protective equipment and clothing are available.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Change hole locations frequently	Mechanical methods, like sharpening blades, changing holes and removing surface moisture from greens using a chain, are used. In some cases, diseases can successfully be treated with e.g. iron sulphate instead of pesticides.

N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly	N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues	Identify and track pest and disease hotspots, including sensitive areas Scout the course daily for early signs and symptoms Accurately diagnose to determine the cause of weeds, pests and diseases	The three common diseases are brown patch in the summer and pink and grey snow mould in the autumn/spring. Sclerotinia snow mould occurs occasionally. Signs of the diseases are surveyed daily in connection with other maintenance tasks. The shady greens are most vulnerable.
	N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions	Use legally registered and approved products; Prefer products for the specific weed, pest or disease; Follow legal requirements; Ensure staff are fully qualified to use pesticides; Ensure staff use appropriate protective equipment; Regularly calibrate and test applicators; Dilute and dispose of leftover product on untreated areas of amenity turfgrass	All chemicals used are approved by the authorities, who carry out occasional inspections on site. Sprayer inspection and calibration, protective equipment: see 2.1.3. Chemical leftovers are disposed of onto roughs, turf growing area, par 3 course or suitable fairways.
N3 Pollution Prevention			
N3.1 Prevent pollution across the entire site	N3.1.1 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from golf course operations	Document procedures for emergency spill responses ; Retain no-spray/no-spread buffer areas next to water bodies and wetlands; Retain no-spray/no-spread buffer zones in and around ecologically sensitive areas	There are two separate rescue plans, one for the clubhouse/restaurant and one for the maintenance facility. Buffer zones are observed, see N1.1.2 and N1.3.1.
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Formal wastewater discharge agreement, if applicable	Levi Golf has a water supply and sewerage contract with the local service provider Levin Vesihuolto Oy. Hazardous substances are stored in a separate storeroom with concrete floor and locked metal door.

	N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from maintenance facility operations	Wash machinery over an impermeable, leak-free surface; Mix and load pesticides and fertilisers over an impermeable, leak-free surface; Triple rinse pesticide containers and applicators	Machinery wash bay has impermeable concrete floor and oil separation well. Chemicals are mixed and loaded over an impermeable concrete floor. Pesticide containers are triple rinsed, and the rinse water is disposed of onto secondary roughs or other suitable area.
	N3.2 Safely manage hazardous substances	N3.2.1 Legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances List of hazardous substances, made available to authorised staff; Product and material data safety sheets; Well ventilated concrete or metal building; Impermeable, leak-free flooring; Sufficient storage capacity; Spill containment kits; Secondary containment e.g., bunds or drip trays; Emergency wash area, as per local requirements (body shower and / or eye wash station); Hazardous substances safely collected by a registered company or body ; Follow any additional legal requirements	Material Safety Data Sheets are available at the maintenance facility, and the list of hazardous chemicals is available at the maintenance facility and the chemicals storeroom. Rescue plans, see 3.1.1. Hazardous waste is collected by L&T, a major national waste management operator. Waste transfer documents are input to a national database. Key infrastructure is in place and meets the local requirements.
	N3.2.2 Legal compliance in the storage and handling of fuels and gases	Tank secured to a horizontal, flat, non-combustible surface; Secondary containment of fuel in the event of spills e.g. bunds and drip trays; Inspection of storage tank(s) at least quarterly, if required; Fire extinguisher in the immediate area	A double-walled fuel tank and a locked storage for LPG bottles are located outside the maintenance facility. The authorities have approved these, but formal inspections are not required. CCIP: Please establish a routine to check the fuel tank and the gas storage quarterly. Secondary containment and leak absorption materials are in place. There are many fire extinguishers, inspected annually.

N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water	N3.3.1 Appropriate wastewater usage, treatment and discharge	Impermeable, leak-free surface; Treatment as per local requirements (oil, grease and / or clipping separation; Formal discharge agreement, if applicable	Levi Golf has a water supply and sewerage contract with the local service provider Levin Vesihuolto Oy. Machinery wash bay has impermeable concrete floor and oil separation well.
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RESOURCES

R1 Water

Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
R1.1 Minimise water demand	R1.1.1 Measures to reduce the need to consume water	Select appropriate grass species for the climate e.g., drought and disease tolerance; Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces; Prioritise native, drought tolerant species for landscaping and planting	Different grass species have been tested over the years. Winter survival is the main concern. Consumption of irrigation water changes from year to year and usually is 9 – 20,000 cubic metres.
R1.2 Maximise water efficiency	R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course	Schedule irrigation based on informed assessment of soil moisture and weather forecasts; Evaluate new irrigation technologies e.g., central control, precision sprinklers etc.; Provide staff training on efficient irrigation practices; Adjust sprinklers to playing surfaces only	The irrigation system (Toro with Hunter sprinklers) is put into use at the beginning of each season (May) and thoroughly checked in the Autumn (September). The necessary service and repair work is done in the winter. Operation of the irrigation system is monitored continuously, and necessary repairs or replacements are done as needed. New irrigation systems and solutions, like AI, are studied for future needs.
	R1.2.2 Practical measures to use water more efficiently in buildings	Monitor and record water consumption (bills, flow meter etc.);	Water consumption in buildings is monitored through invoices. Automatic water taps are installed in the clubhouse/restaurant building.

		Encourage water conservation practices amongst players and staff	
R1.3 Source water responsibly	R1.3.1 Measures towards alternative, lower quality sources of water	Water abstraction permit, if required; Report water consumption to environment agency, if required	Irrigation water is obtained from the system of the adjacent ski resort (which has a water abstraction permit from the river Ounasjoki). Golf club reports water consumption to the supplier.
R2 Energy			
R2.1 Reduce energy demand	R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy consumed in golf course maintenance	Naturalise non-playing areas to reduce mowing and other energy intensive inputs	Some areas have been identified for possible naturalisation. However, the effects to playability must be considered.
R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency	R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings	Monitor and record energy consumption (bills, meters etc.)	Energy consumption is monitored using data from invoices. The clubhouse/restaurant building is co-owned by the ski resort (winter use) and the golf club (summer use). Many lamps have twilight switches. The extremely long daylight hours during the boreal summer reduce the need for lighting.
R2.3 Source energy responsibly	R2.3.1 Measures to source alternative, renewable forms of energy	Understand the energy mix of your electricity supplier; Explore possible greener energy providers	The golf club purchases hydroelectricity from the energy provider. Installation of solar panels has been considered, but no investment has yet been made.
R3 Materials			
R3.1 Reduce materials demand	R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on necessity, including opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives	No specific international requirement, however, identify activities to reduce the demand for materials and look for continual improvements	Office paper consumption has been markedly reduced during the past years. Disposable cups could be a possible next step.
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Commit to sustainable purchasing practices	Favour responsible, lower impact products	Local and regional suppliers are prioritised when possible. The northern location of the golf club poses some challenges, with e.g. topdressing sand which is not locally available. The golf/ski resort restaurant offers locally sourced food and drink, e.g. whitefish and reindeer dishes and regionally brewed beer.

R3.3 Reuse and recycle	R3.3.1 Waste stream separation for maximum recycling and re-use opportunity	Put in place a recycling separation system, according to local rules and availability; Clear, simple and visible bin signage; Monitor and record weight of waste for each stream e.g. invoices, bills etc.	Waste monitoring data is obtained from invoices and online reports supplied by the service providers. Waste bins at the maintenance facility are adequate and clearly labelled. There is a waste bin at every tee box on the golf course. CIP: Please consider installing multi-compartment waste bins on the golf course to improve sorting and utilisation of waste.
R3.4 Demonstrate legal compliance	R3.4.1 Compliance with all local and regional waste management regulations	Authorised waste collector for general, hazardous, industrial and green waste, if required	The two waste service providers are authorized companies and also have ISO 14001 and ISO 45001 certificates.

COMMUNITY			
<u>C1 Health & Wellbeing</u>			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
C1.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C1.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities	Plans in place to respond to incidents and emergencies	Golf club has occupational health service contract with Pihlajalinna, a major health service provider. This covers health checks, risk assessments and healthcare for all staff members. Rescue plans contain emergency response guidelines. Both the clubhouse/restaurant and the maintenance facility offer adequate, safe and well-organised working environments. The golf course is laid out on a fairly large area, 90 hectares, reducing risks caused by wayward shots. Weather radar service is used to warn players of the risk from lightning.

C1.2 Be open and inclusive	C1.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Membership policies free from discrimination across age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ethnic background	Both membership and visitor policies are inclusive and free from discrimination.
C1.3 Employ fairly, safely and provide career opportunities	C1.3.1 Ethical and legal employment, working conditions and professional development	Adopt an equal opportunity recruitment and hiring policy; Follow all relevant legislation and best practice for hiring and employment; Follow all relevant legislation and best practice for worker safety	All employees are thoroughly inducted. The induction guide is versatile and well-organised. Employees get adequate protective equipment and clothing. Seasonal workers get free introductory golf instruction and can play golf free of charge. The club encourages job rotation and supports professional development of interested staff, e.g. greenkeeper and course manager training.
<u>C2 Outreach & Inclusion</u>			
C2.1 Diversify access and provide multifunctionality	C2.1.1 Social and recreational activities at the facility	No specific international requirement, however, identify multifunctional activities and look for continual improvements	The par 3 course is a free-to-all multi-golf course, combining frisbee golf, football golf and park golf. (Highlight) The clubhouse/restaurant is used by the ski resort in the winter, and the driving range doubles as a winter parking lot – excellent sharing of resources. (Highlight) Skiing, cycling and walking tracks cross the golf course and provide outdoors and sports opportunities for the wider community. (Highlight)
C2.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C2.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes	No specific international requirement, however, identify activities to support volunteering and charity and look for continual improvements	There is a long tradition of supporting local charities through golf competitions. Many local businesses provide prizes and other support. Highlight: Levi Golf operates a thriving junior golf programme, supported by a dedicated team of volunteers.
C2.3 Establish active community partnerships	C2.3.1 Positive and constructive engagement with neighbours, the local community and other groups	No specific international requirement, however, identify partnerships and community activities and look for continual improvements	The golf club provides equipment and instruction to pupils from local schools. The junior golf programme also attracts and engages juniors' parents, and many local businesses support the activities. Levi Golf collaborates with local hotels and other tourism service providers.
C3 Communications & Advocacy			

	C3.1 Engage staff and golfers	C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and understanding amongst members and visitors	Involve staff and committees in sustainability efforts; Involve golfers in sustainability efforts; Post sustainability information in the clubhouse and / or on the golf course	At Levi Golf, environmental and sustainability work is integrated into day-to-day work. The board supports and encourages sustainability actions. CCIP: Please establish ways to inform golfers and other stakeholders about the environmental and sustainability work using suitable communication channels.
	C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability	C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community	Share at least 3 Highlights on sustainable.golf	Three highlights have been submitted. Additional highlights have been identified for the future. CIP: Please try to engage local partners, NGOs, or other actors to plan and implement joint environmental and sustainability initiatives.
	C3.3 Follow a journey of continuous improvement	C3.3.1 Measures to help track, review and improve sustainability and climate action	Put measures in place to ensure that OnCourse can be updated annually	New working methods have been put in place to ensure accurate and timely reporting to OnCourse. The comprehensive course management records from the past 20 years form a solid base for future work.

Golf and Sustainability

Among all sports, golf has a particularly close relationship with the environment and communities, golf facilities can bring many benefits to people and nature - from the protection of greenspace and conservation of biodiversity; healthy recreation for all ages; local supply chains; and jobs, tourism and other forms of economic value.

Adopting a more sustainable approach is also good for golf. It's about presenting a high-quality golf course and providing a memorable experience in natural surroundings. It's about being as efficient as possible. And it's about supporting the community in a range of ways that bring increased recognition, respect and contact.

At a broader level, it's important that golf credibly demonstrates its commitment, and its social and environmental value – strengthening the sport's image and reputation for the long term.

Golf facilities that participate in OnCourse®, an international sustainability initiative assured by the non-profit GEO Foundation, are taking a comprehensive approach and striving to be leaders in the community.

Find out more at www.sustainable.golf