GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report

青岛国际高尔夫俱乐部

Qingdao International Golf Club

Prepared by independent verifier Juming Zhang

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2025
Recertification due: 2028

GEO Foundation
Sustainability in and through golf

"During my onsite visit, the following sustainable practices carried out by the club give me a deep impression of sustainability and climate action: keeping basic maintained turf area for playing, reserving large areas of natural vegetation without maintenance on far roughs, covering crushed branches from the woodland of the course on the shaded bare slopes of roughs, replacing Kentucky bluegrass on primary roughs with zoysiagrass with strong resistance to drought, barren, and disease, increasing mowing height in summer, as well as having golf training programmes at different levels on the driving range, using the sod nursery as the venue for wedding ceremonies, and raising funds for poverty family alleviation through various golf matches. As a result, the club has established a good social reputation. Looking ahead to the future, with the implementation of ecological survey, habitat conservation measures and more sustainable maintenance practices, Qingdao International Golf Course will provide more ecological, social and economic value to the city of Qingdao and the community."

Juming Zhang
(GEO accredited independent verifier)

Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that 青岛国际高尔夫俱乐部 (Qingdao International Golf 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.

青岛国际高尔夫俱乐部 (Qingdao International Golf 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, 青岛国际高尔夫俱乐部 (Qingdao International Golf Club) should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, 青岛国际高尔夫俱乐部 (Qingdao International Golf 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**

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	The golf course is embedded in the Shilaoren National Tourism Resort, near to the downtown of Qingdao city. The course team believe that the course has a significant value to the scenic area and urban ecological environment, and have made a plan to protect the native plants, wildlife, water resources on the site. **CCIP: Please conduct an ecological survey for the golf course.** **CIP: Please make a map of wild plants and rare or distinctive bird species on the golf course.**
	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	Wild birds including moorhen occasionally appear in woodlands and lakes. The club understands the government' s policies and legal responsibilities for the protection of wild animals, plants, and the ecological environment. **CIP: Please take protective measures for habitats of rare or distinctive animal and birds.**
	N1.1.3 Sound understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site, if applicable	No archaeological, historical or cultural designations have been found on 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	The club has reduced maintained areas according to patterns of play and suggestions from the architect, and keep the basic turf areas for playing. The surface of high shaded woodland in roughs was covered with crushed tree branches and pine barks from woodland on the course. The far roughs and roughs in front of tees of long holes are naturalised without maintenance practices.

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 Establish mowing buffer zones next to water bodies and wetlands	Local plants have been used, such as black pine, elm trees on far roughs, and Qingdao zoysiagrass on primary roughs. Birds' nests have been seen on roughs. **CIP: Please install more bird nests over the course and establish protective buffers.**
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	**CCIP: Please prioritise native plants wherever possible.**
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	The course is located in the temperate marine climate region. A4, A1 and T1 creeping bentgrasses are planted and reseeded on greens over time, while Kentucky bluegrass is planted on tees, fairways. **Highlight**: **Kentucky bluegrass on roughs was replaced with zoysiagrass with strong resistance to heat and excellent tolerance to low maintenance in 2020, making the course more natural and less maintained.**
	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	Cultivation practices, such as coring, drilling, vertical cutting and topdressing are taken as required to keep the soil healthy. Wetting agents are used on greens as needed. Clippings from fairways and roughs are recycled onsite. Trimmed branches are processed and used for green spaces.
	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	The soil is tested annually by a professional soil lab. Fertilizers are applied according to the soil test report and turfgrass nutrition requirement. The application is carried out by trained staff with protective clothing, using calibrated equipment and detailed record-keeping.

		Regularly calibrate and test applicators	
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	All mechanical equipment was observed and maintained in good condition. Practices including sharpening blades, adjusting mowing heights, removing surface moisture by pulling a power cable, and changing hole locations are carried out as needed. Mowing heights were increased to 4.2 mm for greens, 22 mm for tees and fairways, 45 mm for roughs in summer. During the hot summer season, shade nets are used to reduce dry spots on the greens. In winter, non-woven fabrics are used to cover the green, keeping the green warm and delaying the yellowing time. These practices reduce chemical inputs while maintaining turf in good condition. **Highlight**: **The club encourage employees and caddies to use their spare time to manually pull-out weeds on fairways.**
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 maintenance programmes are made according to the climate, turfgrass species and pest occurrence pattern over different seasons and carried out accordingly. The greenkeeper scouts the course daily for early signs of pests and disease. Only minimal chemicals are used at an early stage of pests and diseases occurrence. **CCIP**: **Please develop a sustainable maintenance and IPM plan, carrying this out during golf course maintenance.**
	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;	Documents for registered, approved and licensed chemicals are checked. Staff are trained and qualified for spraying pesticides with protective clothing and appropriate equipment in good condition.

		Ensure staff use appropriate protective equipment; Regularly calibrate and test applicators; Dilute and dispose of leftover product on untreated areas of amenity turfgrass	
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	Documented procedures for emergency responses to pollution risks were confirmed. The cement ground for washing equipment and mixing chemicals were checked on the site. Isolation plastic cloths for spraying are available. No spray areas on roughs were observed. **CIP: Please establish buffer zones with native tall grasses along the lake.**
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Formal wastewater discharge agreement, if applicable	The wastewater discharge agreement with the local authority was confirmed. The discharged wastewater is collected and directed to the wastewater treatment station near to the course before entering the municipal wastewater pipeline network. Hazardous substances including waste oil, chemical packaging materials, waste batteries were classified, labelled and stored accordingly in designated storage room.
	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	The cement surface for washing machineries at the maintenance department complex was checked. Pesticide mixing / rinsing and disposal of pesticide containers are operated by trained staff according to safety procedures.

	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	The contract with the professional company approved by the local authority for handling hazardous materials was confirmed. Product and material data safety sheets were checked. The hazardous substance storage tanks and room were checked, and safety attention signs were observed. Safety facilities, equipment and their operation manuals and emergency plan were checked. Eye washing equipment installed at the emergency wash area.
		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	The club's fuel storage station was approved by the local authority and found to be compliant with safety and environmental regulations. Fuel tanks, secondary containment of fuel and a fire extinguisher are equipped with and located adjacent to the refuelling area. Staff are trained for refuelling and familiar with the emergency procedures. **CCIP: Please inspect the fuel station and storage tanks monthly.**
	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	The wastewater discharge licence issued by the local authority was confirmed. The machinery washing is on cement ground. Wastewater from machinery washing is discharged into sewage lines connecting with wastewater processing station.

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	Bentgrass used on greens, Kentucky bluegrass on fairways and tees are drought-resistant varieties. In 2020 Kentucky bluegrass on roughs was replaced with warm-season zoysiagrass with better resistance to heat, drought and disease than Kentucky bluegrass. Irrigation water for the course is from the lakes of the course collecting surface water from rainfall. Irrigation plan is made based on season change, soil types, turfgrass varieties and maintenance quality requirement. Only greens, fairways, tees, and semi-rough are irrigated while far roughs are not.
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	Irrigation schedule is made based on soil moisture and weather forecasts. Soil moisture is checked onsite using TDR soil moisture tester as needed. The pumping system, sprinklers and control systems were checked routinely. The staff responsible for watering receive technical training in energy-saving and water-saving. Water wetting agents are used on the soil.
	R1.2.2 Practical measures to use water more efficiently in buildings	Monitor and record water consumption (bills, flow meter etc.); Encourage water conservation practices amongst players and staff	Water consumption records were checked. Water-saving facilities such as water saving toilet and a water-saving faucet were installed at the clubhouse.
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	Water abstraction permits approved by the local authority were confirmed. **CIP: Please explore alternative, lower quality sources of water for green spaces.**

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	Hybrid mowers and carts are used on the golf course. Naturalised non-playing areas on roughs are confirmed.
	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 and bills were checked.
	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	LED lights are used at the clubhouse and office buildings. Solar energy is used for heating shower systems in employee dormitories. Hybrid electric power is used on greens mowers. **CIP: Please explore the potential to use greener energy providers.**
	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	The use of recycled and reused materials, such as paper plates, napkins and catering goods in the restaurant, are a priority. Environmentally friendly products like organic chemicals are encouraged to be used for the course maintenance whereas general materials, especially chemicals with potential for pollution are gradually reduced to a minimum extent.
	R3.2 Purchase responsibly	**R3.2.1 Commit to sustainable purchasing practices**	Favour responsible, lower impact products	The procurement of materials adopts an audit system with a series of processes including application, review, discussion, and decision-making. Locally sourced materials are preferred to be purchased. The purchase quantity is calculated based on the consumption of the previous year and the expected consumption reduction of this year.
	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 sorting bins have been placed at buildings, facilities and the course. **CCIP: Please monitor and record the weight or volume of waste for each stream.**

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 contracts between the club and the professional company with waste collecting and processing licences approved by the local authority were confirmed.

COMMUNITY

C1 Health & Wellbeing

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	Annual physical examinations for employees arranged by the club were confirmed. It was observed that the club provides staff living rooms with the necessary facilities. The club has installed AEDs at the driving range and reception hall, and provide staff training to ensure that personnel can respond promptly and operate AEDs proficiently. The club organize different sports activities to increase staff daily life quality and improve their health level. Plan for responding to incidents and emergencies was checked. All employees are required to be trained on emergency procedure and operation.
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	The club provides services to its members and visitors without any discrimination to anyone.
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;	The recruitment of employees of the club is open and carried out in accordance with relevant national regulations. The club puts great importance on labour safety and provides employees with safety protective equipment according to their work needs. In summer, high-temperature subsidies are provided, and personal safety insurance is purchased for all employees.

		Follow all relevant legislation and best practice for worker safety	Employee dormitories are equipped with solar water heaters.
C2 Outreach & Inclusion			
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	Different golf activities for the public, such as golf experience for students, commercial golf matches for local businesses were checked on the billboard and social networking site of the club. The club provide the sod nursery to hold outdoor entertainment activities like wedding events.
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	The club adopt social responsibility and organize many volunteering and charity activities. The Laoshan Charity Foundation was established in 2023, focusing on impoverished youth families and sick children. Up to now, 15 public volunteering activities have been carried out, raising over 142,500 RMB for the Foundation.
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 club has established the golf training network with more than 10 youth colleges, providing golf programmes for kids and promoting golf development. When temporary workers are needed for the clubhouse and turf maintenance, the club put priority to hiring local community members.
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	Wechat platform for the communications among golfers, members and the club were checked. The club's sustainability commitments, projects, or repairing works are informed through noticeboards or Wechat platform. **CCIP: Please engage and communicate to members on sustainability, increasing awareness and fostering a sense of shared responsibility.**
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	The club have hosted many different golf promotion activities, such as kids golfing experience, youth golf matches, and public golf matches.

				As such, in 2025, Qingdao International Golf Club was awarded the Asia Pacific Top 100 and was honored as one of the top ten youth training courses in China. **CIP**: **Please share key projects as case studies on social platforms to promote the benefits of golf to the environment and society.**
	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	The results of the current sustainable maintenance measures were discussed with the head green keeper.