



GEO Certified® Report

Suzhou Jinji Lake International Club

Prepared by independent verifier Jimmy Zhang

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2024
Recertification due: 2027

“Jinji Lake Golf Course ingeniously integrates native vegetation, forests, wetlands and links landscapes, providing a unique golf resort in the transitional climate region in eastern China. With the maturity of its vegetation and wetlands, implementation of protective measures for animal and bird habitats, and continuous improvement of sustainable maintenance practices over time, Jinji Lake Golf Course is creating a more natural, harmonious, and biologically diverse playing and leisure environment for the public.”

*Jimmy Zhang
(GEO accredited independent verifier)*



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Suzhou Jinji Lake International 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.

Suzhou Jinji Lake International 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, Suzhou Jinji Lake International Club should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Suzhou Jinji Lake International 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 – that 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	Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity surveys	The golf course is surrounded by Jinji Lake and Dushu Lake, 20 km away from the downtown area. The three different golf styles of forest, wetland and links are presented in 27 holes with 9 holes for each type. The native vegetation, wetland and water bodies have been well preserved and utilized, and wild birds occasionally appear in forests and water surfaces. CCIP: Please conduct an ecological survey for the golf course, establishing an inventory of wildlife to be regularly reviewed and updated. CIP: Please consider making 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	Understand legal responsibilities for protected landscapes and species; Record and monitor protected, endangered, or rare species found on the site	The club understands the government's policies and legal responsibilities for the protection of wild animals, plants, and the ecological environment. The club is committed to developing a conservation plan for native plants and rare or distinctive animal and birds on the golf course. They take corresponding protective measures.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	Confirmed. No archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site.
N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the course	N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the required area of managed turfgrass	Observe, track and / or monitor golfer play	The club has reduced maintained areas by replacing turfgrass with sandy land covered with pine barks and high shaded woodland in roughs. The roughs of the links are naturalised without water, fertilizer, pesticides, machinery, and labour.
N1.3 Actively manage habitats for wildlife	N1.3.1 Projects to manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf	Regularly review and follow a habitat management plan; Prioritise native species when planting and landscaping	CCIP: Please introduce conservation measures for key species of wild plants, birds and animals after the ecological survey.

N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		CCIP: as per 1.3.1 above.
N2 Turfgrass			
N2.1 Maintain optimum turf and soil health	N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors	Select appropriate grass species for climate	The course is located in the transitional region. A4 creeping bentgrass, the most tolerant cool season grass to heat, is used on greens. Warm season grasses, Tifway hybrid bermudagrass, well adapted to the local climate are planted on tees, fairways and roughs. In the roughs of the links course, tall fescue and native grasses including cogongrass and Chinese silvergrass are used, making the course more natural and less maintained.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Cultivation practices, such as coring, drilling and vertical cutting are used as required to keep the soil healthy.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	The soil test report was confirmed. The soil is tested annually by professional soil lab. Fertilizers are applied according to the soil test report.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	The maintenance department was visited, and mechanical maintenance facilities were confirmed. The department is equipped with various machines to carry out different maintenance practices. IPM program was discussed and is performed throughout golf course maintenance.
N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly	N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues	Establish patterns and levels of risk for pests and diseases; Scout the course daily for early signs of pests and disease; Accurate pest and disease identification; Map and track pest and disease hotspots; Establish pest and disease thresholds	The greenkeeper develops the maintenance programs according to the climate, turfgrass species and pest occurrence pattern over different seasons. These are carried out accordingly to make the turfgrass stronger and healthier. The greenkeeper scouts the course daily to find early signs of pests and disease. Only minimal use of chemicals at early stage of pests and diseases occurrence.
	N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions	Use only legally registered and approved products; Ensure staff are fully qualified and licenced to use pesticides; Regularly calibrate and test applicators; Use appropriate protective equipment;	All required aspects including chemicals registered, approved and licensed documents and equipment were observed and confirmed.

		Dilute and dispose of leftover product on untreated areas of turf .	
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; Maintain mowing buffer zones around water and all ecologically sensitive areas; Maintain spraying and spreading buffer zones around water and all ecologically sensitive areas; Create a map / aerial visual reproduction, drawing etc of the course showing buffer zones and no-spray, no-spread areas.	The buffer zones of native tall grasses along the lake and no spray areas in rough were observed. The club has an emergency plan to respond to chemical and pollution risks. The ground bunds of mixing chemicals and the washing area were checked on the site. Drip trays and isolation plastic cloth for spraying are available. CCIP: Please explore the feasibility of establishing pesticide-free zones along the waters and woodland on far roughs.
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Ensure all hazardous materials are safely and securely stored; Ensure compliance with all required standards and systems for hazardous waste and wastewater discharge	The storage room for hazardous materials was confirmed and the discharge agreement with the local authority was checked.
	N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from maintenance facility operations	Ensure wash areas are on impermeable, leak-free surfaces; Mixing and loading of pesticides and fertilisers over an impermeable surface; Triple rinse pesticide containers and applicators	The impermeable surface for washing machines at the maintenance department complex was checked.
N3.2 Safely manage hazardous substances	N3.2.1 Legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances	Maintain a register of hazardous materials available to authorised staff; Safe storage in secure and ventilated concrete or metal building; Sufficient storage capacity; Impermeable flooring; Spill containment kits present; Emergency wash area; Fire extinguisher in the immediate area; Secondary containment for fuel, either externally constructed, or integrally manufactured; Regular inspection of storage tanks	The contract for handling hazardous materials between the club and the professional company approved by the local authority was confirmed. The hazardous substance storage tanks and room were checked. Safety facilities, equipment and their operation manuals and emergency plan are confirmed. Safety attention signs about hazardous materials are posted where they are placed, stored, and handled.

N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water	N3.3.1 Appropriate wastewater usage and discharge licences	Wastewater discharge licence; Appropriate treatment of machinery wash water (impermeable surface, oil / grease / clipping separation)	The wastewater discharge licence was confirmed. The machinery wash is on cement hard ground. Wastewater from machinery washing is discharged into sewage lines.
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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	Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces only	Irrigation water for the course is from the lakes of the course collecting surface water from rainfall. Irrigation is applied only on greens, fairways, tees, and semi-rough while far roughs and natural vegetation are not irrigated due to using native grasses.
R1.2 Maximise water efficiency	R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course	Conduct regular irrigation performance checks; Provide staff training on efficient irrigation practices; Ensure effective application of water to target areas; Ensure irrigation schedules are informed by weather patterns and soil moisture analysis	The pumping system, sprinklers and control systems were checked. Sprinklers with adjusting angle were installed along the edges of cart path, and water retention agent and wetting agent are used on the soil. Irrigation is applied depending on weather, soil moisture and condition of the turf. Soil moisture is checked onsite using POGO Pro soil tester.
	R1.2.2 Practical measures to use water more efficiently in buildings	Audit water use regularly; Review bills frequently and look for irregularities; Encourage water-saving practices amongst staff and visitors; Categorise and track water consumption	Water-saving fixtures, including low-flow faucets at sinks and showers and low-flush toilets, were installed in facilities of clubhouse and maintenance buildings. Water bills records were checked.
R1.3 Source water responsibly	R1.3.1 Measures towards alternative, lower quality sources of water	Ensure appropriate water abstraction permit and reporting, as required	Water abstraction permits and reports to regulating 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 course maintenance	Minimise areas of managed turf to reduce mowing, irrigation, and turf inputs	Hybrid mowers are used for greens mowing. The free maintained areas are confirmed on far roughs and natural wetland and woodland.
R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency	R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings	Audit energy use regularly; Regularly review bills; Categorise and track energy consumption	Energy usage bills and consumption data were checked.
R2.3 Source energy responsibly	R2.3.1 Measures to source alternative, renewable forms of energy	Determine potential sources of renewable energy in the area and on-site, through renewable energy providers	Golf carts are equipped with solar panels. The lighting of clubhouse and facilities use LED lights. Triple mowers are driven by hybrid electric power. The hedge trimmer uses electric power.
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	Undertake a review of materials consumed	The procurement is online as planned according to applications of different department. The priority is recycled and locally sourced materials. Trimmed branches are processed and used for green spaces. Clippings from fairways and roughs are recycled onsite.
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Practical use of an ethical / environmental purchasing policy	Adopt a sustainable, or ethical / environmental purchasing policy to maximise the use of locally sourced goods and goods made from recycled, recyclable and certified materials	All the guidelines of procurement were confirmed. The club tend to purchase certified and approved products by the local authority and put very high consideration on low toxicity and environmentally friendly pesticides.
R3.3 Reuse and recycle	R3.3.1 Waste stream separation for maximum recycling and re-use opportunity	Demonstrate waste separation, reuse and recycling; Track how much waste goes to landfill, or is reused / recycled	Garbage sorting bins have been placed at buildings, facilities and the course. The records of weight of waste (invoices, bills etc.) were checked.

R3.4 Demonstrate legal compliance	R3.4.1 Compliance with all local and regional waste management regulations	Use authorised waste and recycling contractor for general, hazardous, industrial and green waste	The waste collecting and processing licences of the professional company and contracts with the club were confirmed.
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COMMUNITY			
C1 Outreach			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
C1.1 Diversify access and provide multi-functionality	C1.1.1 Social and recreational activities at the facility		The news reports of different golf activities, such as youth golf matches, golf training for students, regular membership golf matches and commercial golf matches were presented on the billboard at the main entrance of the clubhouse and driving range.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		The club supports a range of charity activities. Participating guests swing for love and contribute to charity. Charity money was donated to the Suzhou Little Red Riding Hood Volunteer Association, the Tang Mama Charity Center, and the Renai School in Suzhou Industrial Park.
C1.3 Establish active community partnerships	C1.3.1 Positive and constructive engagement with neighbours, the local community and other groups	Create a 'sustainability working group'	The program "Hundreds of golf activities into community" was initiated by the club for the public to recognize and develop golf in recent years.
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		The club provides staff living rooms with the necessary facilities to ensure the health of employees and organize different parties on holidays to improve their daily life quality.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	The club provides services to its members and welcome visitors including teenagers, elderly, women and families to enjoy and experience golf. The news report and photos of related activities are shown on the club bulletin board and Wechat platform.

C2.3 Employ fairly and safely, and provide career opportunities	C2.3.1 Ethical and legal employment, working conditions and professional development	Follow all relevant national legislation and best practice for employment, health & safety etc	The recruitment of employees of the club is open and carried out in accordance with relevant national regulations. The employee cafeteria and kitchen were inspected and in good hygiene conditions. Food safety measures were posted on the cafeteria wall. All employees are required to be trained on emergency procedure and operation.
C3 Communications			
C3.1 Engage golfers and members	C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and understanding amongst members and visitors	Provide information on the facility's sustainability commitments, actions, or achievements	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. The initiative "treasure food, oppose waste, to reduce kitchen waste" by the club to all staff and golfers was has achieved good results.
C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability	C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community	Provide evidence of external communications and community engagement	The club has maintained a good relationship with relative departments of the local authority. The local ecological and environmental departments take on-site inspection and guidance, and samplings of soil and water regularly to ensure that the course meets environmental requirements. The club hosts different golf promotion activities, such as family golfing joy, and many matches. Thus, the club has been awarded numerous honors. For example, the golf course has been recognized in the "Top 100 golf courses in Asia " in 2022.

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