NATURE · CLIMATE · COMMUNITY

GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report
Tawast Golf & Country Club Oy

Prepared by independent verifier: Pentti Viluksela

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2023
Recertification due: 2026

GEO Foundation
Sustainability in and through golf

“A very well managed parkland golf course by a lake, featuring forests, wetlands, meadows, and flowerbeds. The management is committed to sustainability and nature conservation, and the club collaborates with local partners, e.g., the lake protection society. I look forward to seeing updates of the nature survey and environmental programme, as well as strengthening the sustainability communication and dialogue."

Pentti Viluksela
(GEO accredited independent verifier)

Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Tawast Golf & Country Club Oy 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.

Tawast Golf & Country Club Oy 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, Tawast Golf & Country Club Oy should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Tawast Golf & Country Club Oy 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
Manager, Data and Reporting, 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**

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	Maps and aerial images are available. The course was built near the lake Katumajärvi in the late 1980s.

			There are vegetation and habitat surveys of the lake area, including the golf course, done in 1999. **CIP: Update and expand the nature and habitat survey.** The site has a rich and versatile vegetation with many small natural forests and numerous local deciduous and coniferous tree species.
	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	There are no nature protection areas within or adjacent to the course.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	There are three historical stone structures on site, protected by the Finnish Heritage Agency. These are clearly marked (no play, drop zone).
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	Maintenance is minimised on non-essential areas, identified by player observation. Many small forest areas between and outside playing zones are completely naturalised.
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	Environmental plan done in 2000. **CIP: Review and update the environmental plan.** Completed habitat projects include installation of bird boxes (some of which double as distance markers) and installing log bundles in a stream to provide habitat for nutrient-consuming micro-organisms. A flower meadow to support pollinators is being planned.
N1.4 Conserve key species	**N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species**		Not applicable at present.
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	Turf species are selected based on experience and information from other courses, vendors etc. Winter survival is a special consideration on Finnish golf courses.

	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Aeration and top dressing are used to improve soil structure.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Fertiliser application varies considerably in different parts of the course, due to different soil types and circumstances.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	**N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management**	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	A non-chemical approach is always preferred to chemicals use. One greenkeeper is responsible for sharpening blades. Rope is used to remove excess surface moisture. Hand weeding is done in bunkers.
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	A designated greenkeeper is observing signs of pests and diseases daily. A guide booklet used for pest and disease identification. Pest and disease thresholds are based on experience and site knowledge.
	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; Dilute and dispose of leftover product on untreated areas of turf .	Manually kept chemical logs are collected in a computer worksheet. Five staff members have applicator licenses. Applicators are calibrated once a year by the assistant head greenkeeper. Protective equipment is available, and the chemical safety data sheets are up to date.
N3 Pollution Prevention			
N3.1 Prevent pollution across the entire site	**N3.1.1 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are**	Document procedures for emergency spill responses; Maintain mowing buffer zones around water and all ecologically sensitive areas;	A comprehensive Rescue Plan for emergency response has been compiled in 2015. The local Rescue Department inspects the site every three years.

		minimised from golf course operations	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.	Buffer zones are observed around water features. These are wider in low-play areas. A waterway between agricultural area and course, leading to the lake, has been rebuilt in collaboration with other actors to provide filtration of nutrients.
		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	Storage rooms are adequate and well-organised. Waste management contractor L&T is taking care of all waste streams. Wastewater is led to the sewer of the municipal service provider HS-Vesi.
		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	Washing and preparation areas have tarmac surface.
	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	Rescue Department inspects the facility every three years and issues a report. Fuel tanks have secondary containment in place. Maintenance facility has adequate fire extinguishers. These are inspected and serviced by a contractor every year. All caddiemasters and some greenkeepers have taken first aid training. Medical supplies available at the caddiemasters' office (including a defibrillator) and the maintenance facility. Emergency response: Rescue plan (see N3.1.1)
	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)	Wastewater contract with the municipal service. Wash bay has tarmac surface, and its drainage tank is regularly emptied by a contractor.

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 is limited to essential playing areas and only applied when needed.
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	No sensors in use. Irrigation needs are decided based on circumstances, observations, and experience. Rainbird irrigation software in use. Irrigation system is old but works quite well. New pump station installed 5 years ago. Sprinkler heads may require service and/or replacement at times. **CIP: Consider using a soil moisture sensor alongside local knowledge to further reduce water consumption.**
	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 consumption data is available (invoices) but not systematically compiled. **CIP: Establish a system for collecting and analysing data on water, energy and key materials consumption and different waste types.**
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	Irrigation water has been taken from the lake Katumajärvi since the establishment of the course in 1989. No reporting obligations.
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	Many areas not essential to play are either naturalised or lightly maintained, e.g., close to road or OB areas. Many small forests between and outside fairways are naturalised.
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 consumption data available but not systematically compiled. **CIP: See R1.2.2 above.**

	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	Electricity purchased through a joint purchase arrangement. Purchase of solar panels currently under evaluation.
	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	Waste data is available but not systematically compiled. **CIP: See R1.2.2 above.**
	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	The golf restaurant uses local and seasonal products (including a small herb garden on the restaurant terrace) and local suppliers (e.g., ice cream).
	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	Waste data is available but not systematically compiled. **CIP: See R1.2.2 above.** Labelled waste bins are available in and around the clubhouse, on every tee, at the maintenance facility and adjacent to the restaurant kitchen.
	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	Waste management is contracted to L&T, a major service provider.

	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 golf club restaurant is open to all. Children from the nearby school are using the golf course for playing in the winter.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		Some golf events are organised to support charities, e.g., for junior golfers. Volunteers help organising international competitions, e.g., the EGA's European Ladies' Team Championship in July 2023.
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'	**CIP: Create a sustainability working group with members from the golf course/club and key stakeholders.** There is an active partnership with the Lake Katumajärvi protection association for implementing various projects to reduce nutrient runoff etc.
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		Health benefits of golf are widely recognised and promoted.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	Membership is open to all, and visiting golfers are welcomed. There are many open competitions, and many activities for lady golfers and juniors.
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	Seasonal workers are inducted by senior colleagues. Many of them continue in the following season. Staff are encouraged to participate in further education and training.
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	**CIP: Establish environmental and sustainability communication and dialogue with golfers and other stakeholders using appropriate channels (social media, signs, etc.)**

	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 golf restaurant collaborates with local suppliers. Participation in the activities of Lake Katumajärvi protection association is a good example of successful external partnership.

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