GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report
Golf Club Margara

Prepared by independent verifier, Paolo Croce

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2022

Valid until: 2025

GEO Foundation
Sustainability in and through golf

"Over the years, the ownership, the Club and its management have been demonstrating an ever greater commitment in the field of environmental sustainability and despite the non-optimal period for investments, due to the reduced incomers for the pandemic in the last two years, a strong exposure has been planned financial (over €1 million) in the coming years for the construction of a photovoltaic park which should allow the energy self-sufficiency of the Club House and Dormy House, as well as provide an important contribution to reducing the non-renewable electricity component linked to the plant of irrigation.

The agronomic care for the maintenance of the courses is implemented according to rigorous principles of environmental sustainability and all the products are applied to the turf in an appropriate manner. Irrigation consumption is very low, if compared to the irrigated area, but even in this case an important investment has already been planned to convert the turf of the fairways of the Lolli Ghetti course into hybrid Bermuda (Cynodon dactylon x Cynodon transvaalensis).

There is an excellent ratio of playing surfaces with around 65 ha of playing surface out of the total 135 ha owned. Excluding the sealed surfaces (buildings and car parks with about 13 ha) there are large spaces of uncultivated and natural vegetation (about 57 ha). This, combined with the presence of numerous natural corridors, contributes decisively to the presence of wildlife encouraged by the absolute prohibition of hunting."

Paolo Croce

(GEO accredited independent verifier)

Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Golf Club Margara 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.

Golf Club Margara 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, Golf Club Margara should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Golf Club Margara 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	The property has an area of over 135 ha, the Club is a private golf club with two 18 holes courses. “Lolli Ghetti course” measures 6048m, Par 72 and has been open since 1974. “La Guazzetta Course” measures 6176m, Par 72 and has been open since 2006. The club is located within a

				private housing estate, bordering a vast agricultural area mainly intended for cereal cultivation. 22 European Challenge Opens, 2 Ladies Italian Opens and numerous Italian Championships were held on the Lolli Ghetti 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	There are no specific documents on the site, but for many years the Management has shown extreme attention to environmental sustainability and the staff implements the best practices to reduce the maintenance impact on the environment.
		N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	The area has no buildings of historical or cultural interest. However, the Club House and the guesthouse are the result of a careful restructuring of post-World War II farmsteads. The site is within the Municipality of Fubine Monferrato (AL) declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.
	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 golf courses are to be considered a Park land and are inserted within a great agricultural area where the cultivation of cereals with a high consumption of fertilizers and water resources (Mais) dominates. In terms of use of resources, the presence of the two golf courses is certainly an improvement over the surrounding agricultural crops. In the last three years, the playing surfaces have been reduced by around 1.5 ha overall.
	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	There are no documents produced by the Club to regulate the management of the habitat. However, the Superintendent is a highly qualified technician and is aware of the importance to improve sustainability of the area. The 2019 GEO Certification is largely due to his skills and those of his staff and management.
	N1.4 Conserve key species	**N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species**		
	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	Originally all the turf consisted of *Agrostis stolonifera,* fairways included. In those years (the first course was built in 1974) there was still no awareness of the need to establish less demanding turfgrasses from an environmental point of view. Starting from the second half of the 90s of the last Century, also in consideration of the strong infestation of *Poa annua*, the fairways were overseeded with *Lolium perenne* annually, certainly a less demanding species in terms of consumption of water, fertilizers and pesticides. Over time, *Agrostis stolonifera* settles on the greens and collars, while the remaining surface is made up of a mix

				mainly of *Lolium perenne*. The management's future goal is to convert the fairways of at least one course to Bermuda.
		N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		These practices are highly regarded by the Superintendent who strives to maintain the best possible condition for optimum turf growth. The structure of the same is taken care of by continuous aerification operations (especially coring and forking).
		N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	The fertilizations are set by the soil analyzes that are performed annually for what concerns the chemical component. The use of quick and slow-release granular fertilizers are well alternated with liquid distributions for foliar application. The technical approach of the Superintendent is certainly correct from an agronomic and environmental point of view. In the last three years on the specific surfaces (greens, tees, fairways) the use of N and P-based fertilizers has remained substantially stable, while that of Potassium has progressively increased. This data is agronomically positive by virtue of the recognized value of this element for the purposes of greater mechanical resistance conferred to the turf (and consequent reduction of wear problems) and better tolerance to fungal diseases.
	N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	**N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management**	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	All the listed operations are carried out with the right frequency, on greens particularly.
	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 presence of *Agrostis stolonifera* on fairways, only residual following the continuous overseeding of *Lolium perenne*, requires continuous attention in terms of prevention and early identification of potential pathogens. The Superintendent possesses the technical skills to be able to carry out this demanding task and to be able to intervene with the products that the Government, in compliance with the PAN (National Action Plan) has in derogation from time to time and only in the presence of national emergencies. However, these are special events that allow a maximum of ½. specific annual treatments. In any case, a pest and diseases thresholds are established, and golf users seem more tolerant to the presence of diseases and weeds.
		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;	No chemicals are used to control pests (with the above exceptions). In any case Superintendents and Greenkeepers are in possession of the necessary licenses for the possible application of chemical products and pesticides. The same application takes place in compliance with the actual laws and the precautionary principle and the safety of the worker and users.

		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 Club has no operational protocols to manage these emergency situations, but this is explained by the legal impossibility of using pesticides. In the case of liquid, but also solid, fertilizer distribution, buffer zones are provided along water bodies, but also close to the Club House and the Dormy House and neighboring houses. There are no real maps of these areas, but each greenkeeper is aware of this need and follows the Superintendent's instructions.
	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	As regards the Club House and Maintenance facility, the storage and distribution of potentially dangerous materials (fuels, lubricants and more) takes place in full compliance with the legislation in force. The same for wastewater discharge.
	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 machine-washing area is waterproof and equipped with all the legal devices.
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 storage and possible use of potentially dangerous substances takes place in accordance with the actual laws. The Club has a safety plan for what concerns evacuation and first aid devices. In the Club House there is an infirmary while for the most popular events there is also a 118 ambulance with medical and paramedical personnel.

	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 site does not allow you to build its own purifier (too few connected users) nor to use effluent water from urban purifiers (the nearest city is too far away).

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	The Superintendent is well aware of the importance of reducing water consumption. The residual presence of *Agrostis stolonifera* on fairways does not allow to reduce the water supply too much, but this has stabilized in the last three years (average 213,000 m3). In consideration of the considerable irrigated area (52.00 ha) for the two courses of 18 holes and Driving range and Pitching area, the quantity is to be considered very small.
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	Under the technical profile, all precautions have been taken to be able to manage the irrigation system in the best possible way. The PC software is periodically updated, it can be controlled via mobile phone, there are rain sensors and the Superintendent is well aware of the need not to exceed with water resources, both to ensure the best performance for the turf and to avoid unnecessary waste of water.
	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	The consumption of drinking water in the Club House and in the Maintenance facility underwent a significant reduction (16%) in 2021 compared to 2019. This is also thanks to the devices that have long been present in the Club House (push buttons or sensor taps), but above all thanks to greater awareness on the part of Club users.
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	As previously written, there is no possibility of connecting to an urban water purification plant to use the waste water. However, the water basins present make it possible to maintain a good water reserve even in the presence of very strong reductions in withdrawals from wells, as happened in recent summers, characterized by a severe drought.

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	Since 2019, fuel consumption has increased as regards diesel engine machinery (+20%), while the consumption of hydraulic oil and petrol has remained stable. This is however due to an implementation in the machinery park which now allows for more punctual and correct maintenance of the turf. In any case, it has been showed an acceptable reduction in electricity consumption of around 10% over the three-year period.
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	Confirmed.
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	A strong investment in the renewable energy sector is expected in the near future with the construction of a photovoltaic park on the car park canopies. All golf cars today are electrically powered.
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	Confirmed. There is no possibility of weighing the amount of waste produced, as disposal is carried out by the Municipal Consortium, but the recycling % is very high: 85% for glass, 85% for plastic, 65% for metals, 85% for paper and 75% for dry product. **CIP:** While the amount of waste is not directly tracked, establishing a regular approach to estimating waste is recommended (e.g. weight of bins by number of pickups per year). Discuss with waste contractor or use a tool to convert volumes of waste into weight e.g. https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/reduce-waste/measure
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	There is no specific environmental policy on the part of the Club which guides purchases, but there is the awareness of operating in an environmentally sustainable sense, favoring the presence of recycled

		recycled, recyclable and certified materials	materials or materials with low ecological impact and locally sourced (about 50%).
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	Confirmed.
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	Confirmed.

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 Club and its management maintain excellent relations with the neighboring community and with the Municipality of Fubine. Social commitment initiatives are carried out together with the competent departments as well as the organization of events related to the food and wine culture of the area.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	**C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes**		The Club and its management are very involved in charitable and voluntary activities. Over the last three years, the hours of volunteer work done by employees have remained stable (about 300), the number of events has increased (from 7 to 8), but above all the amounts allocated to non-profit organizations involved in the social field have increased (from €10,000 to €30,000).
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'	There are no records of these activities, but the Club allows access to all non-golfers for a cheap amount (€800/year) to a Country Club which includes: swimming pool, gym, sauna, indoor golf, putting green, pitching putting green, driving range, tennis, relax area and access to

				the Club House. This also allows the inhabitants of the surrounding villages to partially use the club's facilities and participate in its social life.
	C2 Golfers & Employees			
	C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	**C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities**		This aspect is well understood by Club users and is one of the main reasons for its appeal and attendance.
	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 Golf Club welcomes all visitors and patrons with courtesy and benevolence. There are no particular social and/or economic barriers to entering the club.
	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	There are currently 28 full-time employees including 10 greenkeepers (including Superintendent). The level of satisfaction of the same is very high as the owners (an important family of Genoese shipowners) have always shown themselves to be very sensitive to accepting the requests and needs of their collaborators. The qualification level is very high: Director, Sports Secretary and Superintendent are graduates of the FIG National Golf School.
	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	During the year, more than 200 communications on the main social media were estimated for the 400 members of the Club and more than 5,000 more occasional users. These are communications that illustrate the life of the club and its activities as well as concerning the sporting activity (over 100 tournaments and about 9,000 participants a year).
	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	Specifically, there are no contacts with environmental organizations, but there are ongoing relationships with the Municipality and the activities it proposes as well as a good network of contacts with associations that operate in the area to promote tourism.

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