



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report St. Laurence Golf

Prepared by independent verifier: Pentti Viluksela

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2023
Recertification due: 2026

“A very well managed 36-hole facility with a professional and systematic approach to providing excellent playing conditions and protecting nature. The courses are well integrated in the surrounding landscape and feature managed and natural forests, natural and naturalised meadows, water features and a rich bird life. Walkers, cyclists, and skiers (in the winter) have access to tracks within and around the courses. Low-impact turf management alternatives and resource-efficient technologies are being tested and adopted. I look forward to seeing an updated landscape and habitat survey, the results of the planned technical developments and active environmental communication.”

Pentti Viluksela
(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that St. Laurence Golf 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.

St. Laurence Golf 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, St. Laurence Golf should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, St. Laurence Golf 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



Verifier's Report

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

THEMES	ACTION AREAS
Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Habitats & Biodiversity• Turfgrass management• Pollution prevention
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water• Energy• Materials
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 checked. Landscape and habitat survey done in 2002.

			CIP: Update the landscape and habitat survey. The site has a diverse vegetation of natural and managed forests, meadow-like low-maintenance roughs, water features etc., and is well integrated with the surrounding forests and fields.
	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 two golf courses are largely built on agricultural land. There are no endangered or protected species on the site.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	There are no historical 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	Many non-essential playing areas have been naturalised during the recent years, mainly by converting managed rough into meadows.
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 programme outlining the management principles has been updated in 2023. CIP: Consider issuing a short environmental report each year to demonstrate how the environmental plan is implemented in practice. Drought-resistant grasses are preferred in roughs. When planting trees, native species are used. A wildflower meadow was established in 2023 to support pollinators. Building of more bird boxes is planned.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		Natural forests and large meadows around the site and between fairways provide habitats for many species.
N2 Turfgrass			
N2.1 Maintain optimum turf and soil health	N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and	Select appropriate grass species for climate	Creeping bentgrass is mainly used but faces competition from annual bluegrass.

	other geomorphological factors		<p>The greenkeeping staff follow the results from. e.g., STERF research on turfgrass varieties.</p> <p>Starting from 2023, the 6-hole par-3 course is managed without any chemical treatment (pesticides, herbicides etc.). The objective is to test a chemical-free approach and to observe the resulting playing conditions.</p>
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Aeration and dressing are used. Compost tea has been used to strengthen the root system.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Soil tests are carried out every year, resulting in detailed reports. Additional tests are done in connection with special projects.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	<p>Non-chemical approaches are used. Mowing blades are sharpened by a designated staff.</p> <p>Surface moisture is removed with rope. Manual weeding is used on new greens and in bunkers.</p>
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	<p>Signs of diseases and pests are regularly scouted, e.g., when changing hole positions.</p> <p>Certain shady and north-facing greens are under special observation.</p> <p>Disease identification is done with all available means (booklet, magnifying glass, internet etc.)</p> <p>Weather conditions and forecasts are considered when deciding on the need for chemical application.</p>
	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;	<p>Chemical product log is checked regularly by the Finnish Food Authority, most recently in 2021.</p> <p>Several staff members have applicator licenses, renewed in 2020 and valid for 5 years.</p>

		Dilute and dispose of leftover product on untreated areas of turf .	<p>Applicators tested and calibrated every year. Protective equipment is available.</p> <p>Applicators are cleaned and rinsed, and diluted leftovers disposed on suitable fairway/rough areas.</p>
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	<p>Document procedures for emergency spill responses;</p> <p>Maintain mowing buffer zones around water and all ecologically sensitive areas;</p> <p>Maintain spraying and spreading buffer zones around water and all ecologically sensitive areas;</p> <p>Create a map / aerial visual reproduction, drawing etc of the course showing buffer zones and no-spray, no-spread areas.</p>	<p>A comprehensive Rescue plan is available, updated every year and distributed to staff.</p> <p>All staff have passed first aid training. Medical kits and defibrillators are available.</p> <p>Buffer zones are difficult to implement around some water hazards, because of the course design. Precise application of chemicals is practiced.</p>
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	<p>Ensure all hazardous materials are safely and securely stored;</p> <p>Ensure compliance with all required standards and systems for hazardous waste and wastewater discharge</p>	<p>Clubhouse has adequate storage facilities.</p> <p>Waste management is well organised with service providers.</p> <p>Wastewater is led to a closed tank, which is emptied by a service provider once a week.</p>
	N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from maintenance facility operations	<p>Ensure wash areas are on impermeable, leak-free surfaces;</p> <p>Mixing and loading of pesticides and fertilisers over an impermeable surface;</p> <p>Triple rinse pesticide containers and applicators</p>	<p>Washing and preparation areas have impermeable surfaces.</p> <p>The washing area will be improved if/when the facility joins the municipal sewer network.</p>
N3.2 Safely manage hazardous substances	N3.2.1 Legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances	<p>Maintain a register of hazardous materials available to authorised staff;</p> <p>Safe storage in secure and ventilated concrete or metal building;</p> <p>Sufficient storage capacity;</p> <p>Impermeable flooring;</p> <p>Spill containment kits present;</p> <p>Emergency wash area;</p> <p>Fire extinguisher in the immediate area;</p>	<p>An authorised service provider inspects the fuel tanks every 5 years (most recent in 2022) and reports to the Rescue Department.</p> <p>Fuel tanks have secondary containment in place.</p> <p>Chemicals are stored securely and safely.</p>

		Secondary containment for fuel, either externally constructed, or integrally manufactured; Regular inspection of storage tanks	An updated Rescue plan is available. Medical kits and fire extinguishers are available.
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 is mainly led to a closed tank, emptied by a service provider once a week. The facility will join the municipal sewer network in the future. Wash bay has concrete surface and is equipped with adequate drainage recipients. Greywater is treated on site with a filtration bed, as instructed by the municipal authority.

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 targeted to essential playing areas. New sector sprinkler heads save water.
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	There are online moisture sensors on 14 greens. Rainbird irrigation software is used. Irrigation hardware is repaired and renewed as and when needed. Pumps are serviced regularly. Weather conditions and forecasts are considered when planning irrigation.
	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;	Buildings are connected to the municipal water supply network. Detailed monitoring of water consumption is difficult at present, because of lack of meters.

		Categorise and track water consumption	Water saving measures have been taken, e.g., automatic faucets.
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	<p>Irrigation water pumped from a major local lake to a reservoir on the course.</p> <p>As stipulated in the water abstraction permit, a regional water protection organisation observes and measures the use and quality of surface water and ground water. A detailed report is issued every year.</p>
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 previously managed areas not essential to play have gradually been converted to low-maintenance or natural meadows. This practice will continue.
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	<p>Energy consumption data is available but not systematically audited.</p> <p>CIP: Establish a practice of collecting and analysing energy data.</p> <p>Air source heat pumps and LED lighting have been installed to reduce energy consumption.</p>
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	<p>All purchased electricity is produced with renewable wind power.</p> <p>Installation of solar panels on the maintenance building roof is being planned.</p>
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	<p>Information is available but not systematically collected and analysed.</p> <p>CIP: Establish a practice of collecting and analysing data on different waste streams.</p>

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	Local suppliers are preferred when available. For example, the golf restaurant uses a local supplier for all meat products.
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	Information is available but not systematically collected and analysed. CIP, as in R3.1.1. above: Establish a practice of collecting and analysing data on different waste streams. Labelled bins for different waste streams are available throughout the facility. Biowaste from the restaurant is composted and used on the site.
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 reliable service providers.

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		There are walking/cycling tracks around and through the course, and skiing tracks in the winter. Restaurant and the club facilities are open to non-golfers.

			The 6-hole par 3 course is open to all and frequently used by school classes and other groups.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		Charity golf tournaments have been organised, e.g., Naisten Pankki Open, supporting women entrepreneurship in developing countries.
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'	Environmental committee has been founded in 2015. The latest minutes include a short report on environmental activities. (This could be expanded and published, see CIP 2 in 1.3.1.) CIP: Consider including representatives from other stakeholder groups in the environmental committee (neighbours, environmental groups, municipality, sponsors, 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.
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 is open to all. Special activities are organised for lady golfers. Par 3 course is open to all, no green card required.
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	Employee induction guide is given to all before they start working. Health & safety risk analysis updated in 2022. Number of accidents is very low.
C3 Communications			
C3.1 Engage golfers and members	C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness	Provide information on the facility's sustainability commitments, actions, or achievements	Club website has a page for environmental information, but the content is rather limited.

	and understanding amongst members and visitors		<p>Social media and weekly email news are used, as well as signs on notice boards and by first teas.</p> <p>CIP: Expand environmental communication on the website and in other channels.</p>
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	<p>The club is an active member of the local community.</p> <p>CIP: Partnerships could be extended to environmental and sustainability issues as well.</p>

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