



## Press Release

### **WM Phoenix Open Achieves GEO Certified Status For Record Fifth Year**

**Scottsdale, Ariz.** (Nov. 4, 2021) – The GEO Foundation for Sustainable Golf recognized the Waste Management Phoenix Open as the first golf tournament in the world to achieve “GEO Certified® Tournament” status for five years in a row for the event’s leadership in sustainability.

The 2021 tournament, played February 1-7 at TPC Scottsdale in Scottsdale, Ariz., received the international award for sustainability in golf from the Scotland-based organization by completing a custom-built program for golf tournaments, including document and evidence submission, third-party verification carried out by the Council for Responsible Sport (the official verification body for GEO Certified Tournaments in North America), a thorough review by GEO, and by agreeing to a range of Continual Improvement Points.

Hosted by The Thunderbirds, an Arizona-based civic organization, and sponsored by WM, North America’s largest environment solutions provider, the WM Phoenix Open became a GEO Certified Tournament in 2017 when the PGA TOUR event became the world’s first GEO Certified Tournament.

Highlights from the 2021 tournament include:

- A comprehensive sustainability report that outlines all tournament impacts and initiatives.
- The hosting of the annual Waste Management Sustainability Forum, attended virtually by more than 3,200 people, used the event’s platform and reach to raise awareness and inspire action.
- Players received a gift from Refresh Glass, made from 100% recycled glass from the 2020 tournament or a local community business, to highlight the circular economy. Each gift included a quick guide to recycling and composting on course as well as sustainability metrics about the tournament’s initiatives related to water restoration, greenhouse gas emissions management, and zero waste. WM’s Chief Operating Officer John Morris added a message to PGA TOUR players about modelling best practices and WM’s commitment to the environment.
- A robust procurement plan and the “2021 WM Phoenix Open Sustainability Requirements” program were actively reinforced with morning check-ins and volunteer training at all concession stands to identify and correct misunderstandings.
- A new, interactive and educational fan element on water management was part of the 2021 WM Phoenix Open Sustainability Tour in a virtual format. Virtual visitors from anywhere in the world could click on links to learn more about water conservation and restoration initiatives. This was a continuation of a longstanding collaboration with Bonneville Environmental Foundation’s “Change the Course” campaign.
- Completed a third-party validation from UL for the ninth year to demonstrate the tournament’s zero waste commitment, achieving “100% landfill diversion rate with 11% incineration with energy recovery.”

“The WM Phoenix Open continues to set the bar for a sustainable golf tournament, and to be GEO Certified for five years in a row is a remarkable achievement,” said Jonathan Smith, Executive Director of the GEO Foundation for Sustainable Golf. “Each year The Thunderbirds and WM strive to continually

improve and innovate, and their vision and leadership is truly inspiring in the mission to accelerate sustainability in and through golf. Our congratulations to all involved.”

“It’s incredible to be building on an 87-year legacy as the tournament hosts with these sustainability initiatives,” said 2022 WM Phoenix Open Tournament Chairman Michael Golding. “The Thunderbirds are proud to align with WM on their mission of working toward a more sustainable tomorrow by prioritizing the WM Phoenix Open’s zero waste initiatives and emissions reduction efforts.”

"The Council for Responsible Sport was pleased to verify the WM Phoenix Open's fifth consecutive certification attempt according to GEO's Voluntary Sustainability Standard for Golf Tournaments," said Shelley Villalobos, Managing Director, Council for Responsible Sport. "The certification criteria is rigorous, but once again, and in the midst of outstanding uncertainty due to necessary COVID-19 precautions, WM and The Thunderbirds have proven their capacity to put values into action, utilizing the event to not only host a great competition and show, but to generate needed funds for worthy social service causes in the greater Phoenix area, while minimizing the event's ecological impacts in terms of waste, water, and climate-changing greenhouse gas emissions."

The 2021 tournament marked WM’s 12th year as title sponsor of the WM Phoenix Open. Over the dozen years, WM has turned the WM Phoenix Open into the most sustainable sporting event on the planet by taking a zero-waste approach through reuse, recycling, composting, donation, or creating energy – with more than 11 million pounds of material going to its next best use.

#### **ABOUT THE WM PHOENIX OPEN**

The 2022 WM Phoenix Open will take place Feb. 7-13 at TPC Scottsdale. “The People’s Open” has been named the Tournament of the Year by the PGA TOUR four times in the past seven years (2014, 2015, 2018, 2019) to acknowledge the tournament’s legendary status as one of the most unique events in golf. The 2022 edition will mark the 87th playing of the event (one of the five oldest events on the PGA TOUR) and the 13<sup>th</sup> with WM as title sponsor. The Thunderbirds were founded in 1937 with the mission of promoting the Valley of the Sun through sports. The Thunderbirds consist of 55 “active” members and more than 280 “life” members who have helped the tournament eclipse \$165 million in charitable giving since its inception in 1932. For more information on The Thunderbirds or the 2022 WM Phoenix Open, visit [www.wmphenixopen.com](http://www.wmphenixopen.com).

#### **ABOUT GEO FOUNDATION**

GEO Foundation is the international not-for-profit dedicated to advancing sustainability in and through golf. Its goal is to work collaboratively to help the sport embrace environmental and social issues and become widely acclaimed for its role in fostering nature, conserving resources and building healthy communities. GEO assures the OnCourse® programs for grassroots golf facilities, new developments and tournaments, each of which can lead to the internationally accredited, endorsed and independently verified GEO Certified® label. Find out more at [www.sustainable.golf](http://www.sustainable.golf).

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