



GEO Certified[®]

GEO Certified[®] Report Golfpark Oberkirch

Prepared by independent verifier, Felix Rusterholz

Certified by GEO Foundation: June 2022
Valid until: June 2025

GEO Certified[®]



**GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

“Golfpark Oberkirch is a very well managed facility surrounded by beautiful scenery. Part of the Migros group, sustainability is built into all management activities and there is a wider opportunity to promote this message beyond the golf course where nature is already evident and cared for.”

Felix Rusterholz

(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that **Golfpark Oberkirch** 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.

Golfpark Oberkirch 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, **Golfpark Oberkirch** should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, **Golfpark Oberkirch** 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

Richard Allison
Manager, GEO Certified Facilities



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	Golfpark Oberkirch has a great deal of knowledge and a pronounced sensitivity towards nature and landscape. It is the specific task of the 'golfpark commission' to maintain knowledge about ecological networks and to evaluate their significance on a communal and regional level.

	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 commission includes representatives of the municipality and the canton as well as environmental experts. They represent the values of and interests for protected areas, habitats and species.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	The golf course is well integrated in the landscape, allowing for the typical topography with its natural flora to remain recognisable.
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	Areas outside the course are maintained extensively. Nevertheless, there could be more natural elements and more differentiated. CIP Look to reduce the area of maintained playing surface, particularly fairways and semi-roughs
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	Maintenance and development are carried out following: a basic ecological approach, supported by expert supervision and repeated monitoring by the Vogelwarte Sempach. This is exemplified by the certificate for nature-oriented maintenance awarded by Natur & Wirtschaft in 2021 and a recently built insect hotel. There is still untapped potential, lying for example in the formation and differentiated maintenance of borders along hedges and wooded areas. Furthermore, the potential for structural elements, such as lying wood, stone piles and more might still be large.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		Monitoring data from the Vogelwarte Sempach is available, providing information on the presence of species worthy of protection measures. This information is incorporated in maintenance planning.
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 club is closely supported by a company that specialises in sports turf maintenance and whose main activities lie in seed selection, fertiliser planning and other aspects of turfgrass agronomy.

	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Conventional measures are taken.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Mineral-synthetic agricultural fertilisers are used in the majority of cases. Their application is based on nutrient analysis and fertiliser planning of the aforementioned externally commissioned company. Trials with more sustainable, organic products are not known. CIP Fertilisation of fairways and semi-roughs should be re-considered.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	The use of products for plant protection is kept to a minimum and is essentially limited to fungal disease control.
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	Good practices confirmed and supported by above mentioned agronomy advice.
	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	The application of plant protection chemicals is carried out under the necessary safety regulations.
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;	Groundwater protection measures are followed; watercourse distances are taken into account.

		Create a map / aerial visual reproduction, drawing etc of the course showing buffer zones and no-spray, no-spread areas.	
	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	Toxic substances such as fertilisers and pesticides are stored separately and professionally. Stock records are kept. Only persons designated to this purpose have access to premises. This safety measure ought to be checked. Furthermore, as few persons as possible ought to be authorised for access.
	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	An official washing area is available for cleaning the vehicles and machines. The tank is emptied by external parties.
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	Confirmed.
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)	Confirmed.

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	<p>The course has its own spring and pond for watering the playing areas. The tees, fairways and greens are irrigated.</p> <p>From the Vogelwarte Sempach, especially the ponds were assessed as ecologically valuable. It is important, that the water use is respecting the habitat requirements of all creatures in and around these ponds (CIP).</p>
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	<p>The amount of available water is limited, which is why it is used carefully. Monitoring is carried out manually. More intelligent control or moisture measurements would have to be examined.</p> <p>CIP Incorporate soil moisture sensor readings to inform irrigation. Consider system and volume consumption audit</p>
	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	Confirmed.
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	The golfpark commission and the public restaurant favour contact to the local population. Public tours of the facility are organised on a regular basis. The golf parks operated by Migros are open to the public.
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	CIP – see N1.1.1

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	Plans are underway to introduce solar-PV in 2023. CIP Consider switching to renewable electricity supplier. Introduce electric maintenance vehicles to the fleet when new ones are required
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 tracked. It is not known whether a material flow analysis has been carried out. This would possibly serve to determine which groups of recyclables have the greatest potential for recycling or logistic optimisation (CIP).
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 operation follows the progressive guidelines of the Migros.
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	Public and operational waste are separated and disposed correctly.
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		
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		
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 golfpark commission as well as the management support the partnership with working groups. Without support from the regional population, it would not have been possible to expand the facility to its current size.

C2 Golfers & Employees

C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		Oberkirch is part of a large sports and health service, which is affordable and open for public. People are not forced to pay a potentially inhibitive membership fee.
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 course including its surrounding infrastructure are open to the public. Inclusion is clearly recognizable.
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	Migros seems to be a fair employer, caring for its employees. Nevertheless, the management of Oberkirch has pronounced difficulties finding motivated and suitable employees.

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	For Migros, sustainability is a big topic in its communication. The question is, whether sustainability is also visible on course (through the work performed by greenkeepers, that is often subtle to the public eye).
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<p>C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability</p>	<p>C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community</p>	<p>Provide evidence of external communications and community engagement</p>	<p>It is not known whether Oberkirch has used the occasion, for example by celebrating certification of Natur & Wirtschaft (CIP).</p>
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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