



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). |
|---------------------------------|--|--|---|

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| 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 | It is not known whether Oberkirch has used the occasion, for example by celebrating certification of Natur & Wirtschaft (CIP). |
|--|--|--|--|

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