



GEO Certified® Report Golfclub Schinznach Bad

Prepared by independent verifier Felix Rusterholz

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2024
Recertification due: 2027

“The Schinznach Bad golf course is located in a unique location, embedded in a sensitive natural environment. This can be protected or promoted to the maximum without having to significantly impair the game. The willingness of the course manager confirms that the measures recommended by Swiss Golf as well as GEO are easy to implement and can sometimes also make the game more attractive. These are measures such as promoting ecological structural elements, establishing more biodiverse meadow areas, leaving borders and much more. The involvement of neighbouring forest owners is also recommended, so that the artificially created green spaces can develop into habitats that are as natural as possible.

Personnel changes carry risks, but also bring opportunities. However, the transfer of knowledge must be ensured for this purpose and any resource problems should be solved as quickly as possible. Digital technology such as GIS mapping and GPS control is able to strengthen operations and optimize costs. At the same time, environmental risks are minimized and biodiversity-relevant information can be optimally recorded. This, in turn, ensures knowledge transfer. It is recommended that all these opportunities be carefully evaluated so that effective measures are planned and implemented promptly as part of a sustainability strategy.

All the best for the continued operation and a fun game.”

*Felix Rusterholz
(GEO accredited independent verifier)*



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Golfclub Schinznach Bad 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.

Golfclub Schinznach Bad 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 and Critical CIP's (CCIPs) to be reviewed at recertification, Golfclub Schinznach Bad should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Golfclub Schinznach Bad 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
Director, Certification and Credibility,
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.isealliance.org



Verifier's Report

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	Understand all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity knowledge and records	As part of Swiss Golf's Swing for Biodiversity, the living spaces were mapped. However, the card is not yet available to the club and employees. An intensive examination of the map, the environment and the available quality area is strongly recommended in order to increase the sensitivity of all actors on the course. Although the habitat map mentioned above represents added value, the consideration of the sub-areas, especially the ecologically valuable or the high-potential, should be carried out in more detail, so that attention can also be paid to rare species, for example. In the neighbouring building, bat roosts are reported. Appropriate measures to promote more nesting sites or the food supply would strengthen the species.
	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 golf course area is part of a floodplain protection park. The proximity to the river and the high groundwater level lead to increased vulnerability of natural water flows and therefore require special caution. In addition to special habitats, rare animal species are also present. Their occurrence can be queried in the cantonal GIS, among other places. In addition to protected tree populations, these include rare birds (e.g. reed warblers), reptiles (grass snakes) and insects such as wild bees and butterflies. CIP: Please request a map, basic data and results from monitoring from the canton and municipality, if available.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	Fruit trees from Pro Spezia Rara are promoted. However, there is not a corresponding preservation concept. The trees are also not mapped. CIP: Please establish a conservation concept in which the location, variety and vitality of the individual trees are noted.

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 course has meadows inside and outside the playing areas, which could be ecologically enhanced by means of regionally typical, site-appropriate seed mixtures. CIP: Please involve wildflower seed specialists in seed selection and try to implement professional sowing.
N1.3 Actively manage habitats for wildlife	N1.3.1 Projects to manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf	Prioritise native species when planting and landscaping	Based on the SwissGolf Swing for Biodiversity habitat mapping, the various habitats are to be documented and suitable target species defined. A club member carries out bird monitoring in his own interest and also imparts his knowledge to other members. These and similar actions are worthy of support. The findings should be documented, and successes communicated. CIP: Please try to enter into cooperation with local nature and bird protection associations. This can bring mutual benefits from knowledge and funding opportunities, helping to pursue effective nature conservation that does not restrict the operation of the game as much as possible.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		Rare species are repeatedly identified by members or the Greekeeping team. However, these are not documented. CCIP: Please expand documentation and mapping of rare 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	As proven seed suppliers, UFA and SwissGreen are in close contact with the club in order to be able to continuously respond to innovations in the seed range. The goals are to promote resistance and resilience and to save resources.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Promote mechanical care. Less frequent mowing, slitting / spiking, sand delivery increased from previously 330 tons to over >800 tons per year. Deep loosening. CIP: Please carry out regular soil analyses in order to optimise the amount of sand supplied and reduce the need for resources.

	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	For 6 years, organic fertilizer has been used. In the meantime, synthetic fertilizers are to be completely dispensed with. However, Primo Maxx is used as a growth regulator. Liquid fertilisers with bacteria and fungal cultures are intended to compensate for the scarce soil life due to a high proportion of sand. CIP: Due to the very vulnerable location in the immediate vicinity of water, the fertiliser regime could be questioned holistically and critically. The need for and use of plant treatment products must always be set in connection with the soil cultivation measures taken, such as the increasing sanding of the soil. These are likely to lose valuable soil life as a result of the growing sand content and are also more at risk of leaching. Their nutrient binding is also likely to decrease. Additional specialist knowledge, increased documentation and regular soil and water analyses are strongly recommended.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture;	The space available in the workshop is very limited, which is why the grinding of the mowers takes place externally.
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	Hazardous substances are handled professionally. There is no food in the working radius. Personal safety and environmental protection are observed. The necessary documents are available and are kept properly. The most important notes are recorded in Punctus, such as the location and spread of hotspots. CIP: Digitization (mapping) of the system could be optimized to control consumption and ensure logging. This should also be of great benefit in the event of possible water pollution, especially to prove innocence.
	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 GPS-controlled machines available. Employee changes lead to a considerable loss of knowledge. CIP: It must be ensured that, despite a change of employees, the knowledge and authorisation in connection with the handling of auxiliary materials are secured. CIP: The new acquisition of modern, GPS-controlled spraying and fertilising equipment could be set for 2027, at the latest.

		Dilute and dispose of leftover product on untreated areas of turf	CIP: GIS maps could also be established.
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	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;	Emergency numbers for medical care are prominently displayed. Groundwater protection zone is staked out in the field. CIP: The buffer zones (>3 m) must always be adhered to, and if possible extended. Swissgolf's recommendations towards larger-scale natural habitats would also serve to provide greater protection.
	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	No concept available as usual handling of materials. However, there are studies for new construction, according to which security would be increased at all levels.
	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 minimum requirements are met. However, space is incredibly tight. CIP: The conditions for cleaning and storing machines could be optimized.
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;	Compliant.

		Fire extinguisher in the immediate area; Secondary containment for fuel, either externally constructed, or integrally manufactured; Regular inspection of storage tanks	
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)	Compliant.

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 Appropriate grass species for the climate e.g., drought and disease tolerance	Fairway irrigation renewed seven years ago. Individual control of the sprinklers is possible. Weather station available for assessing the situation with regard to plant protection measures.
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;	Rain gauges in use, not so soil moisture sensors. CCIP: Please explore the feasibility of investing in a portable soil moisture meter. Water consumption is registered, 100% spring water.

		Ensure irrigation schedules are informed by weather patterns and soil moisture levels	
	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	Data and documents are available.
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	Compliant.
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	No abnormalities, but also no efforts in terms of optimization.
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	Apart from renewed bulbs in the workshop, no reduction measures have been taken. In-depth analyses, especially on power consumption and optimization, are missing. CIP: With a construction project, optimization potential in greenkeeping must also be analysed. This would allow a greater switch to electrical appliances, especially if electricity is produced onsite.
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	Currently no extraction, as there are severe structural restrictions. New construction project offers opportunities. CIP: Exploiting potential. Swiss Golf offers support in the form of advice and, under certain circumstances, financing.
R3 Materials			
R3.1 Reduce materials demand	R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on	Undertake a review of materials consumed	Disposal is carried out professionally.

	necessity, including opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives		Material orders are placed just in time, which leads to small inventories.
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	There are purchasing guidelines. Nevertheless, emphasis is placed on regionality and trusting supplier relationships. Outside the greens and tees, river sand is used where necessary, which requires shorter transport. CIP: The flow of goods in the catering industry and the shop must also be critically analysed and, if necessary, optimised.
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	Green waste can be deposited next to the bathroom. Removal takes place in agriculture.
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	Compliant.

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 game operation is exclusive to members. The contribution system has been revolutionized. Agglomeration is invited. 300% more juniors within 2 years.

C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		There are 2-3 charity tournaments held annually.
C1.3 Establish active community partnerships	C1.3.1 Positive and constructive engagement with neighbours, the local community and other groups	Inform and include staff, members, and committees in sustainability efforts	There is no sustainability working group. Board of directors discusses purchases and sometimes assesses sustainability. CIP: A competent working group should be established that comprehensively examines all areas of sustainability. This supports the company and at the same time promotes internal identification as well as credibility to the outside world. CIP: The AG is to be involved in the development of the club and infrastructure. Reports from GEO and Swiss Golf could be made public and recommendations for action with regard to biodiversity promotion and sustainability should be assessed and accompanied by the working group.
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		No discussion was held.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	No special measures known.
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 was a very respectful and trustworthy cooperation between the board and greenkeeping. CIP: The introduction of new employees is of the utmost importance, especially for key people.
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	No specific measures known. CIP: Communicate sustainability issues regularly and sometimes portray the work of greenkeeping. This makes the complexity of the day-to-day business and the natural conditions on the golf course visible, usually increases the appreciation of all parties involved and promotes acceptance in less-than-optimal playing conditions.

	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	Various events are established, such as the Greenkeeper Trophy. Members are used as helpers and socials are carried out. CIP: The proximity between the new head greenkeeper, his team and the members must continue to be promoted.
--	---	---	--	---

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