



GEO Certified® Report Golfclub Gams-Werdenberg

Prepared by independent verifier Felix Rusterholz

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2025
Recertification due: 2028

“On a relatively small area, the facility offers attractive play operations, embedded in a unique valley landscape. Valuable habitats for flora and fauna are available. Their optimisation and networking with the region must be ensured. A carefully developed and introduced concept for differentiated care is eagerly awaited. It not only improves the effectiveness of measures taken, but usually also increases economic efficiency.

After implementing all legally compliant adjustments in the area of wastewater and refuelling, the Golfclub Gams has sufficient modern infrastructure to ensure its operation and protect it from risk.”

Felix Rusterholz
(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Golfclub Gams-Werdenberg 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 Gams-Werdenberg 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 Gams-Werdenberg should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Golfclub Gams-Werdenberg 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, 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	• 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	Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity surveys	With the documents 'Inclusion of golf course' and 'Overview plan for eco-areas', plans are available that give an approximate overview of the location and type of the different green areas. There are no known

			revisions so that more detailed information on vegetation or type of cultivation could be communicated. Organic areas are managed by external farmers. CIP: For the external managers as well as the greenkeepers, please develop updated, binding maintenance plans for the optimisation of the maintenance regime and for the protection of ecologically valuable habitats. Elements to be added include stone bars and other structural elements. Some other important additional information could include cutting times, degree of graduation and neophyte locations.
	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	There are no known protected species or habitats on the site.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	N.A.
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	There is no tracking. Extensification follows in the course of ecological or other upgrades. CIP: Please introduce measures to identify underutilised areas with scope for naturalisation.
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	Monitoring is carried out by external bodies, e.g. of amphibians. However, data sheets are not available on OnCourse. Nor do the results seem to be incorporated into the management concept. Detailed care concepts are not available. Care is not very differentiated. Thus, hardly any seams that would offer valuable transition and retreat areas are recognizable. Complementary structures made of wood and stone are also desirable. CIP: Please try to participate in Swiss Golf's 'Let's Swing for Biodiversity' programme. Through this, the national federation provides support in an applied way with valuable tools for the design and management of habitat areas. GC Gams has relatively little land on the site for ecological compensation. Instead, the 'Green Golf Gams' Foundation was established at the time of

			creation. Several upgrading projects outside the official perimeter have been upgraded or co-financed by the foundation. Ongoing or upcoming projects are not known. CIP: Please prepare and upload a map of the play area vs. eco-compensation areas (on course and externally), with the potential addition of a project plan for naturalisation.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		The naming and location of priority species is part of the maintenance concept and area approach. If no target and guiding species are known, these should be surveyed by a specialist and appropriate measures defined.
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 GC Gams is professionally supported by external experts. In addition to the expertise of the seed and fertilizer supplier UFA, Troon Golf Switzerland LTD is also on hand to assist on a mandate basis. Advised by the specialists, the greenkeeper continuously conducts trials with resistant turf grass varieties. CIP: As a result of climate change, the further development of suitable lawn grasses should be maintained. Please consider seeking advice and evaluating these possibilities through a more regional and thus more flexible service provider.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		For the greenkeeping team, the focus of good soil conditions is on the weather. Central measures are aeration on greens 2x/year or creation and maintenance of drainage on individual fairways
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Fertiliser planning is supported by external consultants. The greenkeeper does not have any analysis results. However, these form the basis for planning for resource-saving, sustainable plant nutrition and should be critically questioned, discussed and understood. CIP: Please undertake periodic soil testing over the coming years. Fertiliser and maintenance management should be based on this.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	In 2024, neither active pest control nor herbicide use was required. Among other things, this is a success for the head greenkeeper. By means of suitable preventive fertiliser, plant strengthening, soil care, hygiene and lawn care measures, it is essential to follow up on this in order to also apply for fungicides and the like. to be able to do without.

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	Confirmed. CCIP: As there has been a change in the team, please ensure that the responsible greenkeepers continue to have the necessary training and expertise.
	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 .	Control by the canton has taken place. CIP: Please upload all reports to the OnCourse Documents Library, with the associated accompanying documents and list of measures.
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; Create a map / aerial visual reproduction, drawing etc of the course showing buffer zones and no-spray, no-spread areas.	In order to identify particularly critical areas and protect them from toxic input, the biotope zone is marked with red posts. The team is not aware of any particularly sensitive zones, apart from the wetland biotope. An emergency spill response plan has been developed. CCIP: Please ensure that relevant employees are aware of and trained on the new emergency spill response plan.
	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	The storage and disposal of dangerous goods and their containers is regulated and in accordance with the law.
	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 washing area, oil separator and tank room do not comply with the legal requirements. Therefore, the authorities are demanding renovation. Information about the current project planning and implementation status has been uploaded to the OnCourse Documents Library.

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	Cross ventilation, square edging, etc. do not meet the legal requirements, which is why renovation is pending. Information about the current project planning and implementation status has been uploaded to the OnCourse Documents Library. As per N3.1.1 an emergency spill response plan has been developed.
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)	The availability of valid plans has been confirmed. Licenses would not be required, according to management.

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	Water is drawn from groundwater with a reservoir. There are no remaining reserves. Annual reporting to the canton is necessary. A responsible use of water as a resource was confirmed. The consumption volume depends on the weather and is approx. 20,000 m3
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	The valley location of the golf course requires good knowledge and a high level of sensitivity on the part of the head greenkeeper. Manual / optical assessment. Irrigation settings are constantly adjusted.

	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	The consumption of water and electricity is not analysed in particular. CIP: Please introduce measures to more accurately monitor water and improve recording, analysis and optimization.
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	No special permits are required.
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	The operation of the driving range is automated with robotic lawnmowers.
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	Resource consumption is documented. Heating is done with gas.
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	Analysis of the demand and purchase of energy and possible alternatives has been initiated. Swiss Golf provides very valuable support with regard to environmental issues. CIP: Please develop an energy action plan with measures for optimization.
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	The disposal of recyclables is orderly.

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 is a lack of a procurement concept. No details are known about purchasing for the shop and gastronomy, as these are operated externally. Vehicles and machines are generally bought as used cars with a few hours. They are used for long periods of operation. CCIP: Please develop an official procurement policy with sustainability criteria. Those responsible for the shop and gastronomy should also be informed and educated for effective implementation.
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	Disposal is carried out by professional partners. The concept is understandable.
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	Fulfilled.

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 facility is open to the public. Networking in the region is given. Sponsorship of clubs, courses for the handicap, etc. are offered. Exchange / communication is uncomplicated and familiar.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		Major events such as the European Championships take place on a recurring basis. Volunteering of 80 to 100 people is required for personnel support.

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'	There is no working group. Nevertheless, there is active networking with the outside world and with the canton. One of the approaches is the honey production by four bee colonies. CCIP: Please establish a Sustainability Working Group to develop future plans and projects.
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		The personnel situation is difficult. The fluctuation is high. It must be ensured that knowledge transfer is ensured. CIP: Nursing concepts, process documentation, job descriptions and protocols will help in control, instruction and quality management.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	Not an issue.
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	Head greenkeepers will be trained at the BZG in Switzerland.
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	Various media are operated: Homepage, FB, Instagram, Newsletter kleine Postings No supra-regional advertisements. There are no certificates yet. The information channel is sometimes an annual report to members.
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	See annual report.

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