



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report Golf & Country Club Hittnau

Prepared by independent verifier Felix Rusterholz

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2024
Recertification due: 2027



“The Hittnau Golf Club is situated in a unique landscape in which it is respectfully integrated. It is run in an absolutely professional manner and in compliance with the applicable laws. Biodiversity can still be promoted without any negative impact on the game. The adjustments are likely to be cost-neutral in terms of maintenance. At most, they require increased staff sensitivity, for which training and professional project support from specialists are recommended. There is similar potential in the area of resource management. With greater data, more concrete targets can be set into the future.”

*Felix Rusterholz
(GEO accredited independent verifier)*



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Golf & Country Club Hittnau 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.

Golf & Country Club Hittnau 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, Golf & Country Club Hittnau should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Golf & Country Club Hittnau 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
Manager, 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.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	Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity surveys	The GC Hittnau does not have a digital mapping of the natural habitats, which would ideally complement the digital map of the course. Such a record would be valuable for communication, maintenance planning and the site-specific promotion of flora and fauna. However, a comprehensive environmental impact report (EIR) was prepared in 2013, which provides information on the diversity and condition of the natural values on the golf course site, including a plan. A performance review was carried out in 2021, the results of which are also available as a report. The report shows that the cantonal requirements regarding extensive meadows have been almost fully complied with. CCIP: Please map the remaining habitat areas in GIS in addition to the play areas. CCIP: Please develop a habitat management plan, which will be a valuable planning and monitoring aid for achieving the ecological objectives in accordance with the EIA.
	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 overarching projects with the municipality, local or regional nature conservation organisations, etc. Initiatives are being initiated to launch regional biodiversity promotion projects, although the operator organisation does not necessarily have to be in charge. However, the golf club has valuable land and many areas of potential (see performance review).
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	Nothing known.
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	No mappings are being carried out. No measures are planned.

			CIP: Please continue to review whether the size of the playing area can be reduced. Target areas are ecologically valuable edges along hedges and stepped forest edges.
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	Wherever possible, the golf club follows the expertise of the commissioned consultancy firm FÖN. The reports and monitoring programmes show the types of funding. CIP: Please ensure that meaningful habitat monitoring is carried out on a recurring basis, from which effective protection and support measures can be derived. The individual sites could be recorded in a plan (as per N1.1.1 above). Habitat quality should be improved through networking elements such as fringes, wild hedges, structures, etc. A high level of diversity can be promoted, especially near forests, with the support of the district forester. These include: - Bays and stepped forest edges - Fringes - Old grass strip etc.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		Red List species are known on the site. No special measures are taken. The site has valuable bodies of water, meadows and forests. The migration of animals, especially amphibians, must be kept free of obstacles and dangers as far as possible. CCIP: Please record the location of individual Red List species in any maps and plans for the site (as per N1.1.1 above). CIP: Please remove obstacles and hazards, creating exit aids from watercourses and shafts.
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 geomorphological and climatic conditions are complex. Due to the location, snow and wetness can impair the development and vitality of the grass communities. Turf specialists provide support in the selection of grass varieties. CIP: Please continue to check the suitability of climate-resistant species.

	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Discussion takes place.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Soil analyses are carried out every two years, which serve as the basis for fertiliser planning. The greenkeeper largely prefers synthetic products to organic ones. In view of the fact that other courses almost completely dispense with synthetic products without having to accept any loss of play, Hittnau Golf Club should also pursue more sustainable goals with regard to its fertilisation practices. CIP: Please evaluate alternative fertilisation practices with the help of application trials on the course. This will ensure a more careful use of non-renewable raw materials such as phosphorus, mineral oil, etc.
	N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding Promotion of the plant location, needs-based plant nutrition, activation of soil life, plant strengthening, and professional equipment maintenance are key factors in preventive plant protection.
	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 The golf club supports modern spraying technology. CIP: Please continue to respect environmental legislation and optimise the methods used.
		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 . An inspection report (reference no. 92300077-5) dated 09.11.2023 is available from the cantonal laboratory. This honours the Head Greenkeeper and his team and confirms general compliance with the law in terms of the storage, use and disposal of environmentally hazardous substances and containers. The main criticism was the reporting, which should be more detailed. Furthermore, it was pointed out that a distance of 20 metres from surface waters must be maintained in connection with the application of Instrata Elite W-7278.

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.	See N2.3.2 Supplementary: A system inspection was carried out by the cantonal office on 30 October 2023 (run no. 555386). No deficiencies were found. CIP: Please maintain and continuously improve operational safety. An official occupational health and safety system is recommended.
	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	See N2.3.2
	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	See N2.3.2 Supplementary: There is no washing area suitable for spraying equipment. Residual broth and rinsing water must be spread on the pitch.
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	See N2.3.2
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)	A certified washing area is available.

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	Irrigation is semi-automatic and needs-based. The water is drawn from two separate sources. In addition to the built-in irrigation system, dry areas outside the greens and tees are approached at certain points and irrigated manually. CIP: In view of the ever-increasing summer drought, it should be examined whether aerial photographs or local measurements can help to reduce water consumption. Such technical can support operations, especially in situations where there is no long-term experience.
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	Irrigation is primarily the responsibility of the head greenkeeper and is based on experience. This represents a loss of knowledge, particularly in the event of the absence or departure of the person responsible. There are hardly any technical aids in use. CIP: In view of the ever-increasing summer drought, it should be examined whether aerial photographs or local measurements can help to reduce water consumption. Such technical can support operations, especially in situations where there is no long-term experience.
	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	No current cost-cutting measures are known. CCIP: Please monitor water consumption and review savings and potential efficiencies on an ongoing basis. This applies to the operation of both the course and the clubhouse. Please also continue to report this water consumption and sensitise staff.
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 spring water supply is authorised.

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	There is potential for energy savings with more differentiated green space maintenance. CIP: Please try to make partial areas more extensive, leaving edges and only mowing alternately. CIP: Please try to use branch material on site to create branch piles and other ecologically valuable structural elements. This will reduce the cost of haulage and disposal fees.
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	Energy consumption is not systematically monitored, which makes targeted optimisation difficult. CCIP: Please monitor energy consumption on a regular, ongoing basis. Periodically compare measured values and review reduction measures.
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	Renewable energy must be promoted. CIP: Please consider commissioning a feasibility study on the installation of photovoltaics. Swiss Golf can support a PEIK audit. Further information at https://swissgolf.ch/de/nachhaltigkeit/ziele-projekte/energie/
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	Primarily regional craftsmen are considered.
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 no procurement concept. CCIP: Please introduce a sustainable procurement policy that includes sustainability, regionality and seasonality criteria. Try to communicate this in a profitable way. CIP: Please consider contractually committing your suppliers to this policy.

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	Waste is disposed of separately. However, the amount produced is not monitored and analysed. CCIP: Please monitor waste production on a regular, ongoing basis. Periodically compare measured values and review reduction measures. CIP: Please examine ways to reduce waste, including the sensitisation of members and companies.
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	There is no waste concept. However, proper disposal is guaranteed. CIP: Please try to develop a waste concept that defines ambitions and measures that are periodically reviewed.

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		There is a lively tournament programme. The club currently has around 50 juniors. There is no exchange with neighbouring residents, local clubs, etc. CIP: Please maintain external communication to secure new members.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		Not discussed.
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 dialogue with local residents, community associations, etc. CIP: Please embed ecology and sustainability within the organisation, such as forming an interdisciplinary 'sustainability working groups'.

C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		Not discussed.
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 discussed CIP: Please discuss inclusion within the Board of Directors and form an opinion.
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	Staff turnover is low. There are opportunities for further training. CIP: Please Sensitise and empower staff with regard to sustainability and biodiversity promotion. CIP: Please address sustainability at commission level. However, it should also be reflected in the mission statement and actively implemented within the Executive Board.
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	There are various means of communication to provide information on the topic of sustainability, and in particular on the measures taken and the existing potential. CIP: Please try to do good and share widely.
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	CIP: Please try to do good and share widely.

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