

# GEO Certified® Independent Verification Report



**Golf Facility: Golf Du Rhin**  
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**Date: February 2019**

## Executive Summary

The certification audit was performed at the 21<sup>st</sup> December 2018. This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> renewal, first audit was in 2012. Golf du Rhin was represented by Frédéric Neff, club manager, Paul Bontemps, head greenkeeper and Mr Haupenthal, environmental advisor.

Golf du Rhin (Chalampy, near Mulhouse) is a private golf facility located on the frontier of France and Germany within 35 km of Basel. It's specific location, situated on an isle between a river, the Rhine and a canal, the Grand Canal d' Alsace, makes the site very unique (altitude 126 m). Across the canal you find the industrial zone of Ottmarsheim so the Golf du Rhin is both for people, birds and wildlife a safe and quiet escape. The club has 18 holes well integrated in the surrounding landscape. The botanical identification with discrete signs will inform the golfers about the major species of trees. The site of the Golf du Rhin is preserved within the ZNIEFF program and designated as "natural area for ecological interest for fauna and flora". The specific location of the orchids is a well hidden secret in order to maintain the species. The club is aware of the quality necessary for players and nature and is well surrounded by experts with professional advice. The GEO Committee is almost the same as the Golf Course committee which works very well. The intention to achieve certification rewards for the efforts that has been made, has led to an intensive increase of knowledge about the club and his possibilities to comply with sustainability.

## Nature

The management of Golf du Rhin is advised by experts on ecosystem protection and enhancement. The club is doing efforts to put all this information about biodiversity on the golf course on their website so everyone who wants to know more can read it.

Special rewards for the program for the protection of the orchids. The orchids are already spreading over the golf course, more spots are identified! During the audit there was also a document/report available with pictures and detailed mapping of the orchids. Where do they occur, how they are spreading over the golf course (the conservation leads to new spots where the orchids occur. These areas are also no-spreading zones for the use of pesticides. These zones are also protected from golf players by using blue stakes.

As a result the monitoring of the orchids is also available on the website of the club: the mapped increasing habitats (last survey dd. 30/5/2018); extra spots on hole 5, 10, 12 and 13.

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The mapping of the orchids was noticed as an opportunity for improvement during the audit in 2015: the club takes those remarks of an GEO auditor serious and shows results!

What can they do extra concerning the orchids? They mentioned a golf club in Germany (Neurenburg) which published a flyer about their orchids. Perhaps they could collaborate on this.

The listing of the birds is up to date because a selfmade-biology expert makes this listing when he frequently visits the course on a voluntary basis. Also, the "LPO" (League d'oiseaux) is helping with the listing of the birds (Oiseau, Alsace). There is also a guided tour with arborists. Some species lists were dated 2015, the plant listing is more up to date (2018).

Further the club showed cooperation in France with "FFGOLF programme golf pour la biodiversité". The club installed 2 boxes for bats in the trees, also buzzards has been seen on the course.

Overseeding of poa annua with *Agrostis tenuis*, *Agrostis stolonifera* and *Festuca rubra* has started step by step since 9 years and still going on. For the *Agrostis* every year a new variety is used.

The surface of fairway and semi rough maintained and the rough areas they created before are still there to enhance biodiversity and less need for fertilizer, pesticides and operations (less fuel).

The new practice area is now integrated in the maintained turf area but needs also irrigated.

The head greenkeeper has a spreadsheet with planning, actions, machinery etc

Their course consultant created a helpful planning tool in excel: the pivot table shows detailed planning for the greenkeeper, lists all the concerned products and is used as a supplement of the normal workplanning of the greenkeeping department. This tool helps to evaluate the "forecast versus the realised planning" ("prévu < = > Réalisé").

The club invested the last 3 years in new machinery for the greenkeeping department: easier seeding (opening soil for overseeding), cutting roots from trees (Verti Quick), also cutting larvae from raised surfaces (Planet Air).

Improvements in the near future are soil moisture measurements. This helps detect the need for water and will be available at the green of hole 9. Will be installed by Association Meurde in 2019

For the use of pesticides the legal buffer zone is 5 m in France (this differs from country to country, in Belgium this is 6 m except when a special obligation is given by the government.) The club has special attention for the orchids: the spots are no-spray areas and located on a map.

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Legal use of products is difficult to be aware of the current rules. The use of pesticides in France can be found on the following website: <https://ephy.anses.fr/> this website from the French government is not at date so this is difficult to comply with.

The greenkeeper can buy a product on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January, which can be legally sold until March but last use would be May. This kind of information makes it difficult for the greenkeeper to have in mind which products can be used. When he makes his list at the beginning of the year: during that year information about new deadlines appear, but this is too late.

When we compare the use of the pesticides from 2012 till 2018 we can see that golf du Rhin is now using more bioproducts. The use of herbicides on the fairway is nil in 2018, in 2017 they choose to maintain the rough and semi rough to keep the fairway free of herbicides.

A quick check on the availability of the necessary safety data sheets at the greenkeepers office was successful: Extersi Stressguard dd. 20/3/2018 and Ascernity dd. 22/6/2018 was found.

The latest analysis of the soil was performed 28/11/2018 (before in 2015) by Mr. Barberousse. In this survey was the soil at fairway 4, 7, 10 and 15; tees and greens analysed. As a result the consultant advises to use less N (max 85 kg/ha) in 2019. Also an analysis of the cores was performed to evaluate moisture, fertilisation etc

The greenkeeper has a detailed log of all the work that has been done on the course and follows the rules on where to use any chemicals or not (Digitaire): yearly planning, only spots allowed and awareness of the no-treatment zone.

### Resources

The use of water is a difficult issue for Golf du Rhin, however between two rivers/canals they still need groundwater for irrigation. In 2017 they used 76.533 m<sup>3</sup> water for the course, 3.234 m<sup>3</sup> for the clubhouse and 100 m<sup>3</sup> for the greenkeeping/maintenance facility.

The increase of water use from 2016 to 2017 was referred to the fact that the maintained area augmented (2 ha). The renewal of the practice (became also an irrigated area) and renewal of 3 holes (new greens) was realised then. The huge increase between 2017 and 2018 was related to the very dry summer in 2018. This resulted in an extra use of water by 50%.

A regular water audit has been taken place from the government of Rhin-Meuse. This has led to subsidies to invest in more efficient machinery which will in time prevent the use of water, pesticides, etc.

The audit revealed no changes in the use of energy, electricity is still the main source. Only solar panels are installed and used for the lightning device.

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The solitary location of the club makes it difficult to change the energy source.



The club is doing efforts in relighting: more and more LED is installed.

At the practice area: the light goes off at night.

Greenkeeping: no extraneous lights in the facility.

Everywhere at the facility there is movement detection for lighting (dressing rooms, toilets).

The heating of the building is with electricity, where possible radiators are shut off. For instance in the fyto storage container an electrical heating device is there only for protection against freezing.

The use of LED will help decrease the electricity use of the clubhouse, practice area etc

The waste register was checked and mentioned the transport of used oil (900 liter, certificate dd. 23/10/18), oil filters (certificate dd. 24/10/2018) and empty pesticides bottles (certificate dd. 19/6/2018 by ADIVALOR).

Proof of the formal training on pesticides by Paul Bontemps was show (licence till 13/3/2023). Two other greenkeepers have also their licence but the head greenkeeper is reality the only person who works with the fytoproducts. These colleagues followed 2 days of training to get the licence, no extra training is needed until 2023. All the greenkeepers are trained for first help aid. An AED is available at the clubhouse.

### Community

Members are invited to help weeding by knife (see highlight, see also communication on Facebook).

Also, already mentioned the employee training was shown: Paul Bontemps about fytoproducts and pest control (also mechanical and biological).

Local purchasing depends on the material: sometimes materials are available in France, sometimes in Germany (club is situated at the border between France and Germany). For instance: for the greens they use sand of the Loire river (this is not a local purchase but for quality reasons this sand is chosen). In Germany the club purchases fertilizers but a local gardening company is hired for cutting wood debris. The cutting material is then reused at the course and the surroundings.

### Conclusion

I, Isabel Dobbelaere, independent accredited verifier, recommend Golf du Rhin to be awarded the GEO Certified® ecolabel because it is still moving forward to a sustainable club and golf course. The greenkeeping and the advising experts/staff are doing a lot of effort for registration, using less dangerous products, using more

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machinery to prevent chemical support etc. The spreading of the orchids is the proof of a healthy golf course. Also, the investment in new machinery shows a future proof course management.

