GEO Certified® Report
Golf Limpachtal

Prepared by independent verifier Dominik Scheibler

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2024
Recertification due: 2029

GEO Foundation
Sustainability in and through golf

"Golf Limpachtal is exemplary in many aspects, and I wish the team continued success in maintaining and further expanding this standard. There are numerous opportunities for further improvements in terms of the sustainable operation of the golf course. However, it is clearly visible that the Golf Limpachtal team has already taken many good steps with motivation and commitment and is planning and evaluating more. This deserves recognition, not least with further certification as GEO-certified."

Dominik Scheibler
(GEO accredited independent verifier)

Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Golf Limpachtal 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 Limpachtal 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 Limpachtal should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Golf Limpachtal 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.isealalliance.org**

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	There is a maintenance manual in which the maintenance is defined for each type of existing ecological compensation areas. If necessary, this care plan is discussed and adapted with the ecological monitoring group. As part of Swiss Golf's "Swing for Biodiversity" campaign, a habitat map was created. The combination of habitat map and care instructions enables correct maintenance of the areas. Conclusion: The knowledge, ecological support, implementation of maintenance and quality of the ecological compensation areas are present at a good to a high level. **CIP: Please emphasise care of the hedges, meadows and herb edges. The width of the riparian vegetation is somewhat tight in various places.**
	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 requirements from nature conservation for Golf Limpachtal, which is located about half in the cantons of Bern and half in Solothurn. The Limpachtal golf course is an ecologically very valuable "island" in the intensively used agricultural landscape. The members of the ecological advisory group and other people interested in nature continuously register the animals found on the golf course. There are also various rare species (like various (water) birds, brown hare, snakes, beavers, etc.). There is a (partial) hunting ban and leash requirement for dogs on the site. This is also important for resting migratory birds.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	There are no protected cultural assets. **Highlight: The buildings used by the Golf Club are old farmhouses typical of the region. These have been preserved in their original**

				appearance despite challenges in terms of space use and building insulation. The barn (caddy hall) was even rebuilt in the original style after a fire. Most of the pavements are built from yellow Jura gravel typical of the region. In addition, various old fruit tree varieties are cultivated on the site.
	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	**CCIP: There potential for larger areas of maintained rough to be converted into high rough or flower meadows. Please explore further opportunities for implementation, as suggested in the previous certification report. At best, the areas can be thinned out by means of topsoil removal (4-5 cm) so that the vegetation does not grow too high, and balls can still be found easily. This transformation could take place in stages over several years.** **CIP: The shading of the parking and Stöckli could be improved by planting native, large-crowned trees. Remove ecologically worthless plane trees where possible.**
	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	For plans, see N1.1 The Limpachtal golf course is located in a former valley characterized by swamp meadows and forests. This was heavily drained and is now used intensively for agriculture. The issue of water is therefore extremely important. The numerous existing water bodies have a high ecological value. The Schlossbach was excavated as early as 1998. The Entenbach followed in 2004. **Highlight: The beaver is active along the Entenbach and is tolerated as far as possible.** Due to the deliberately planed hilly topography of the golf course, there are also valuable dry meadows. It is pleasing that there are hardly any invasive neophytes. Also pleasing are the areas grazed with sheep in the peripheral zones of the golf course. **CIP: Explore whether the dried-up stream (Solothurn part) could be transformed into a chain of ponds (successive, elongated ponds in the stream bed). The ponds (e.g. for dragonflies and amphibians) could be sealed, e.g. by means of pond liner, and periodically flowed through by the stream (rainy periods).**

			CIP: There are some rock garden areas (within the boxwood border at the parking lot) that could be planted with valuable native plants such as horseshoe vetch, kidney vetch, scabious, common rock-rose etc. without much effort.
N1.4 Conserve key species	**N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species**		**Highlight: Numerous special nesting boxes for rare and endangered species have been installed in various places on the golf course, e.g., for little owls, barn owls, kestrels and hoopoes.** **CIP: A ruderal area in the north of the golf course is severely affected by bush encroachment. Parts of it could be released into hedge groups. Another part could be dredged and upgraded in favour of gravel areas with small amphibian ponds. This could benefit pioneer species (e.g., yellow-bellied toad, natterjack toad, dragonflies, etc.)** **CIP: Hedges and trees (especially Prunus and Sorbus species.) could be planted along the entire south-west border of the golf course in order to promote forest connectivity between the forest on the Eichiberg and on the Mülisberg.**
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	Several experiments were made with alternative grass species on the greens, e.g., with Festuca rubra and Agrostis palustris. However, these failed. The currently present grass species are well adapted to the location. A sod garden is present. **CIP: Another possible attempt would be to use the new Poa annua cultivar Pa33. Poa ovina could also increase the drought tolerance of maintained roughs and fairways.**
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		The soil on the golf course is sandy loam. This offers a good starting point in terms of water and nutrient storage, structure, risk of compaction and organic content. Since the course is used all year round, careful attention is paid to the lowest possible soil load from carts, trolleys, and maintenance vehicles, especially in the winter months and in wet conditions. The protection of soil and turf is implemented in the best possible way.

		N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	The fairways are fertilized 1 x per year with a slow-release fertilizer. Only about 60% of the determined demand is fertilized and certain areas are not fertilized at all. Liquid fertiliser is applied weekly on the greens. Weather forecasts (precipitation/temperature) are considered. Fertilizer is sometimes also applied selectively by hand. **CIP: Where possible, the fairways should not be fertilised or preferably only with organic fertiliser.** **CIP: There are various organic liquid fertilizers on the market with rapid action. These options should also be checked for the greens and would be ideal in combination with the compost tea already used.**
	N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	**N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management**	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	Sharpening of mowing blades and removal of surface moisture is done regularly. Dew moisture is often removed in various ways. Compost tea is regularly applicated on the greens in large quantities.
	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	There is a lot of know-how in the team regarding the whole golf course, the problem areas, and the possible measures. Weather data is used for dollar spot forecasting and prevention. Insecticides are used very rarely. Alternatives are examined before use (e.g., metarhizium for crane flies). New approaches are constantly and often successfully tried out regarding lawn varieties, green space maintenance and plant protection. Often also against the background of the increasing legal restriction of plant protection products.
		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 plant protection products used are registered and approved by Swiss law. Two employees are trained to apply plant protection products. Spraying and protective equipment are sufficiently maintained. Protective equipment is provided. The spraying machine is emptied and cleaned on untreated areas of turf.

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.	A safety manual for the greenkeeping team is available and regularly discussed. The necessary equipment is available. Buffer zones around water bodies are present. However, these are often quite narrow! **CCIP: Please explore ways to widen the buffer areas and herb fringes, especially where greens and tees are closely adjacent to water surfaces. This can also be done on the water side.**
	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 necessary permits and contracts are in place. Wastewater is led to the municipal wastewater treatment plant.
	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	There is a washing area with a sealed floor and a wastewater shaft with oil separator. Mixing and loading of pesticides and fertilisers over an impermeable surface has recently been improved with a large spill containment kit. The sprayers are cleaned regularly.
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	Warehousing has recently been inspected by the cantonal authorities. Various improvements have been achieved. A tank facility was newly built in 2023. While safe storage in a ventilated concrete or metal building is not fulfilled, the plant protection products are stored in lockable metal cabinets with drip trays. Sufficient storage capacity is available. Impermeable flooring is present. Spill containment kits are present. An emergency wash area is available.

			Fire extinguishers in the immediate area are available. Secondary containment kits for fuel are available. Regular inspection of storage tanks are done.
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)	All permits are in place. The washing area is functional and equipped with an oil separator.

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	**CIP: There is unexploited potential to save water on the golf course. This is especially true on the maintained rough and the fairways. A reduction should/could also be accompanied by more drought-resistant grass species.**
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 largely done by hand. Watering is only done where it is needed. **CIP: The construction of an automatic and well-adjusted irrigation system (hardware and software) including tensiometer and inclusion of the weather forecast should be planned in the medium term.**
	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 greatest consumption of potable water is caused by the showers in the cloakroom. **CCIP: Potable water consumption should be checked monthly to detect irregularities. An improvement in this area was suggested during the last certification and should therefore be implemented as soon as possible.**

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 groundwater supply is contractually approved by the cantonal authorities. The drinking water is obtained from the municipal utilities. Groundwater is used for the toilet in the Half-Way-House. **CIP**: **Water-saving fittings could be installed on all water fittings, especially in the cloakrooms (showers, washbasins), if they are not already present.**
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	Robotic lawnmowers are currently being tested and purchased. These are to replace diesel vehicles and should lead to a reduction of fossil energy. There is the idea/intention to operate the robotic lawnmowers with self-produced solar power. There is a photovoltaic system on the driving range. The new building (caddy hall) is well insulated and only the cloakroom area is heated (attic and caddy hall are not). The buildings are heated with an almost climate-neutral wood chip heating system. The buildings are equipped with automatic sliding doors and vestibules.
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-efficient appliances are generally purchased. Energy consumption should be checked more frequently.
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	**CIP: There is further potential for the installation of PV systems, e.g., on the maintenance building. This should be considered in particular when renovating/rebuilding it, also with regard to the operation of the robotic lawnmowers.**
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	Tees are no longer given away free of charge. Tees made from recycled material can be purchased. In the restaurant, rather small portions are served to reduce food waste **Highlight: Food leftovers from the kitchen are used in aperitif to reduce food waste.**
	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 comprehensive concept for sustainable procurement. However, sustainability does play a role in procurement considerations. The pro shop is demand-oriented – sustainability is secondary. The menu includes various local/regional products. **CCIP: Please develop a sustainable procurement policy with sustainability and ethical criteria to guide purchasing decisions.**
	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	Lawn clippings are basically mulched (incl. on tees!), except on the greens. Lawn clippings from the greens are brought into an external compost plant. Cardboard, PET, and glass are collected separately. For PET and glass, there are also collection points for the golfers at various points on the golf course. The handling of waste (PET/glass, etc.) is addressed in the course rules. Paper consumption is constantly being reduced (reduction of paper invoices, communication to members mainly by e-mail, digital Birdybook – paper version can be purchased). **CCIP: The quantities of the different types of recycled waste should be recorded separately to better track trends over time and derive further efficiency measures.**
	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	Waste is recycled or disposed of where possible and in accordance with Swiss standards.

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 course is a place of quiet nature recreation for both passers-by and golfers. Various public paths lead through (or along) the golf course. These are actively used by walkers and nature observers. Various events and activities are organized for the members, such as meetings for board/card games, etc. These are especially appreciated by older members. Some students look for lost balls on the facility and are allowed to resell them. **Highlight: There is a holiday offer for local school children for which a golf instructor is provided free of charge.**
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		Three charity golf tournaments were organized. These are either offered by the main sponsor or made possible by the club at special conditions.
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 a regular exchange with the municipal authorities. The golf club is a member of the local trade association. The members of the ecological advisory group, which meets four times a year, are locally anchored people. The restaurant is open to the public.
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 facility is wheelchair accessible A para-golf tournament was held.

			The driving range may be used without previous knowledge.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	**C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies**	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	Guests are welcome Family atmosphere among members and guests
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	Most employees work with annual working time contracts. Since the golf course is open all year round, there are fewer only seasonally employed staff. Progressive working conditions are made possible and home office is also tolerated as far as possible. Further training is offered and made possible. For the Greenkeeping team (7 people), there is a specific manual for occupational safety.
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	Reusable drinking bottles were given away to the members, which can be filled at the drinking water fountains. On the website there is a well visible subpage on the subject of nature & golf. The GEO certification and other efforts of the golf club in this area are also listed. In addition, the latest news on the topic of sustainability is regularly published via webpage and social media.
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 above C1.1, C1.3, C2.1

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