



GEO Certified[®]

GEO Certified[®] Report Ostschweizerischer Golf Club

Prepared by Independent Verifier, Dominik Scheibler-Bagdasarianz

Certified by GEO Foundation: June 2021
Valid until: June 2024

GEO Certified[®]



**GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

“Ostschweizerischer Golf Club is on a good footing to pursue sustainability in its daily operations. The natural habitats were a pleasure to see and clearly well cared for. There are also very good measures in place concerning cultural practices towards turfgrass and other flora. Planned improvements include an upgrade to more efficient irrigation and transition away from drinking water sources. There are also several opportunities in the coming years to explore the capture of rainfall, transition to renewable energy, and reduce fertiliser use in non-priority areas by biological means.”

Dominik Scheibler-Bagdasarianz

GEO accredited Independent Verifier



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Ostschweizerischer Golf Club 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.

Ostschweizerischer Golf Club 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 set for the future, Ostschweizerischer Golf Club should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Ostschweizerischer Golf Club 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

Richard Allison
Manager, GEO Certified Facilities



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitats & Biodiversity Turfgrass management Pollution prevention
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Energy Materials
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	All habitats and vegetation types are mapped, and the natural biotopes are also visually marked with poles on the golf course.

			The biodiversity surveys could be optimized. Good data of birds and amphibians is available.
	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 protected areas nearby. The golf course is, however, divided by a river (Thur) and is located directly above the ground water body of the river. For this reason, great care must be taken with the use of fertilizers and pesticides. Ponds, streams and their banks, and especially the periodically water filled swales are of special value. These habitats are typical for floodplains and should be further promoted as a priority.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	There aren't any such areas in the area of the golf course. Up until the 1930s, this place was a dynamic floodplain of the Thur. Afterwards, the Thur was channelized and the land was used for agriculture. The golf course was established in 1948.
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	Owing to its location between the channelized river Thur and a hill range, the golf course is very narrow. For this reason, the fairways are also very narrow. This leaves almost no room for further narrowing of the fairways without compromising the playing quality.
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	All habitats are mapped. All habitats are treated according to the plan. This concerns primarily the mowing along the banks of natural ponds and small streams as well as of the flower meadows. Flower meadows and roughs are not all cut at the same time. The wooded areas are not cared for by the golf club. A tree concept featuring native trees was developed to achieve a more diverse age structure in the long run. This is a highlight of the club's work.

			<p>Instead of a planned artificial pond, a very good, near-natural pond was constructed (Lake Robert).</p> <p>In collaboration with 'Respect insect' there are plans to enhance an area especially for insects. This is a good opportunity to reduce the impact of mowing with fast and heavy machines and to support dragonflies in particular with more fish-free ponds and puddles. It is okay for such ponds/puddles to dry out periodically in the summer.</p> <p>CIP There is potential for improvement in the treatment of the wooded areas and the hedges by setting up piles of foliage and deadwood and by periodically thinning out.</p>
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		<p>Beavers cause problems with dams now and then. In return, they allow for free-flowing water by removing growing vegetation, which benefits the dragonflies and amphibians. In consultation with the gamekeeper, drain-pipes are inserted in the beaver dams.</p> <p>There are numerous nesting boxes, an insect hotel and two honeybee nesting aids on the course. This is great, but it must be kept in mind that promoting honeybees creates substantial feeding competition for wild bees.</p> <p>Due to the location of the golf course on a former floodplain of the Thur, the promotion of amphibians, dragonflies and other water-dependent species is of great importance. There are several bodies of still and flowing waters with an impressive variety of species on the golf course.</p> <p>CIP Wherever possible, the number of puddles (even as small as 1 m²), ponds, and periodically water filled swales should be further increased.</p>
N2 Turfgrass			
	N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties	Select appropriate grass species for climate	The seed mixtures conform to the current state of research of UFA Samen.

<p>N2.1 Maintain optimum turf and soil health</p>	<p>adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors</p>		<p>The seed mixtures have been adapted to fit Swiss climatic conditions.</p> <p>Only <i>A. stolonifera</i> is used on the greens, but in 4 cultivars.</p> <p>The drought resistant <i>F. ovina</i> is used only on the maintained roughs.</p> <p>CIP <i>Festuca rubra</i> or <i>A. capillaris</i> could enhance the resilience of the greens throughout the whole year.</p> <p><i>F. ovina</i> could also be used on fairways and the driving range to enhance drought resistance.</p>
	<p>N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition</p>		<p>Regular sanding and aerification of intensively used areas.</p> <p>Use of wide-tired vehicles to avoid soil compaction.</p> <p>Dry weather conditions are preferred for maintenance work on the lawn.</p> <p>Regular use of a mycorrhiza compound (<i>Trichoderma atrobrunneum</i>) on the greens helps to reduce fertilizer and pesticide use on the greens.</p> <p>CIP Explore the use of <i>Trichoderma atrobrunneum</i>. It may be even more successful and sustainable in combination with organic fertilizer. The selling company can provide further advice.</p>
	<p>N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation</p>	<p>Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis</p>	<p>Continuous monitoring of the nutritional requirements especially on the greens and tees.</p> <p>Restricted use of fertilizers on the greens.</p> <p>Use of fertilizer on the tees seems to be rather high and could possibly be reduced.</p> <p>Semi roughs, fairways and tees are mulched three times per week.</p>

			<p>Unfortunately, a trial of granulated organic fertilizer in combination with synthetic fertilizers was unsuccessful; the effect set in too slowly.</p> <p>CIP Reduction of fertilizer use on the maintained roughs should be considered.</p>
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	<p>Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding</p>	<p>Surface moisture is removed from the greens almost daily.</p> <p>Dollar spot treatment with micronutrients, wetting agent and N-fertilizer.</p> <p>Sharp mowing blades are maintained by using 'old/used' blades right after top dressing with sand.</p> <p>Frequent verti-cutting and aeration is done.</p>
N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly	N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues	<p>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</p>	<p>The whole site is checked almost daily for signs of vermin damage.</p> <p>Very good knowledge of problem spots thanks to long-standing employees.</p> <p>Weed control against moss is done by using primarily ferruginous preparations.</p> <p>Growth regulators will no longer be used in the future.</p> <p>Fertilizer on greens cannot be washed out into surface water bodies. If they are washed out, they infiltrate in a drainage pit.</p>
	N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions	<p>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</p>	<p>Only permitted pesticides are used.</p> <p>Two people are trained in the use of pesticides.</p> <p>The required protective gear is at hand.</p> <p>The equipment is serviced regularly and is ready for use.</p>

			Correct disposal of leftover product by way of the retail partner.
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.	The staff is trained in the handling of the used substances, including response in case of an accident. There are buffer areas around the waterbodies, and these are clearly marked with poles. The 2 meter minimal width of the buffer zone is just barely sufficient considering the unavoidable wind drift. CIP Consider the use of a 'shrouded' (covered) sprayer around buffer zones to avoid wind drift.
	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	There are no dangerous substances in the clubhouse apart from an oil tank and cooking oils, which are safely stored. Waste is separated and wastewater is disposed of correctly.
	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 wash area is sufficiently large and has an impermeable surface. The floors in the maintenance facility on which pesticides and fertilizers are handled are sealed. The applicators are cleaned correctly.
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;	All potentially dangerous substances are stored securely. There is a lockable, well ventilated room for the storage of pesticides. There is enough space for neat storage of the substances. Auffangwannen für den Treibstoffvorrat sind vorhanden. There are spill containment kits for the fuel reserves.

		Secondary containment for fuel, either externally constructed, or integrally manufactured; Regular inspection of storage tanks	Spilled liquids cannot get into the sewage and can be pumped. A binding agent for oil is present and easily accessible. There is a fire extinguisher at hand. There is no emergency wash area. However, the sanitary facilities in the staff changing rooms are very close by. CIP The pesticides should be stored in a lockable cabinet.
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)	There is no oil, grease and clipping separation in the wash bay. Clippings are removed manually from the manhole cover. The used washing water is collected in a tank and is pumped out and disposed of regularly and professionally by a specialized company.

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	Because of the permeable, gravelly ground, the site requires a fairly large amount of water (up to 25'000 l). The water is pumped from the groundwater and returns to it partially. It is planned to completely renew the irrigation system. It will then be possible to irrigate the different playing areas individually, which is currently only partially possible. CIP

			Renewal of the irrigation system by 2024 with the aim to irrigate the different playing areas individually and to avoid the use of drinking water sources for irrigating the lawn of the driving range.
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	There are no tensiometers. It is planned to renew the whole irrigation system. With the renewal of the irrigation system it should be possible to reduce irrigation, especially on the fairways. An irrigation software is existing, but will be renewed as well. CIP Include tensiometers in the planned new irrigation system and the possibility to track water usage in more detail.
	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	Water usage is monitored via the water bill. Low flow toilets are installed.
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	With the renewal of the irrigation system, it is planned to switch from drinking water to ground water for the irrigation of the lawn of the driving range. There is no grey water use of rainwater from the roofs of the buildings. CIP Look to incorporate rainfall and surface run-off to on-site water bodies.
R2 Energy			
R2.1 Reduce energy demand	R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy	Minimise areas of managed turf to reduce mowing, irrigation, and turf inputs	See comments on N1.2

	consumed in course maintenance		
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 and heat usage are monitored continuously via the utility bill. The clubhouse is well insulated after its renovation. CIP Replacement of the oil heating with a renewable heating solution is the most urgent measure which the OSGC should consider until 2030 the latest. There is potential for reducing the use of heating energy by insulating the office and shop buildings.
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	Warm water for the clubhouse and the guesthouse is provided by solar collectors. Installation of an e-charging station next to the driving range is being discussed. For this purpose, solar panels would be installed on the roof of the driving range.
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	Excellent performance in this area.
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	The restaurant uses some regionally produced food (meat, beverages), sometimes seasonal and a few certified foods. CIP There is large ecological potential for improvement in the offering and communicating of vegetarian / vegan menus, the use of alternative plant-based products in cooking and the use of certified (e.g. organic) food and clothing.

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 collected separately and disposed of or recycled correctly according to Swiss standards. Grass clippings are mulched (except on the greens and tees) in order to reduce the need for fertilizer.
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	Every form of waste is disposed of correctly.

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 hiking and a bike trail between the driving range and the river, which is used frequently by the public. There is another trail crossing the river (Thur) over the only bridge and the golf club near the clubhouse. Other paths through or along the golf course are not open for the public because they are not safe due to the narrow geographical situation of the golf course. However, it is not always easy to keep people out of the danger zones despite signalisation. CIP Safety for the public may be improved with signs at the last intersections before reaching the golf course instead of only at the borders of the golf course.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		Golf club members help with weeding of invasive neophytes.

			Golf club members help with removing surface moisture on the greens.
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'	<p>There is a positive contact to the local community including local nature protection groups and the local government.</p> <p>There are no regular meetings with stakeholder groups.</p> <p>CIP Consider making this a more formal group with input from external sources</p>
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		It is possible to rent a room to stay overnight at the golf course. This offers an excellent possibility for recreation.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	<p>The golf club is open for visitors.</p> <p>A large part of the golf club members are female.</p>
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	<p>Employment according to Swiss standard regulations.</p> <p>Provision of employee benefits like access to the golf course.</p> <p>The greenkeeper is a member of the Swiss greenkeeper association.</p>
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	<p>A golf club member wanted to sponsor a new artificial pond. The club management was able to motivate him to build an ecologically very valuable natural pond instead (Lake Robert).</p> <p>Communication about nature values like bees or bugs on social media (Instagram).</p> <p>CIP Provide information on the club's website about biodiversity on the golf course and sustainability in general.</p>

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

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