



GEO Certified[®]

GEO Certified[®] Report Vulpera Golf

Prepared by independent verifier, Hector Forcen

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

GEO Certified[®]



 **GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

“Vulpera Golf is a relaxed 9-hole course amidst native alpine landscapes and coniferous woodland. It offers a great atmosphere to golfers and non-golfers alike, with various facilities available for the community and visitors to the area. Course management is largely built on years of local knowledge and experience with strong collaborations working to record and protect the natural values.”

Hector Forcen

GEO accredited independent verifier



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that **Vulpera Golf** 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.

Vulpera Golf 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, **Vulpera Golf** should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, **Vulpera Golf** 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

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	Vulpera Golf is one of the oldest golf courses in Switzerland. The 9-hole course is nestled in the idyllic and sunlit alpine nature of Vulpera.

			<p>Club members have done an excellent job compiling the different plant species that can be observed on the course in a list.</p> <p>CIP- Improve the quality of habitats and vegetation mapping.</p>
	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	The club cooperates closely with local authorities and associations. Playing golf, you have the pleasure to enjoy a large number of either protected or beautiful flowers and plants. As an example, is the field of violet Gentian flowers.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	No archaeological, historical, or cultural designation are present (or known) on the course.
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	The turfgrass surface is reduced to the minimum possible, surrounded by lush coniferous forests in all the holes of the course. The head greenkeeper have detailed golf course maps.
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	The forests of the course are maintained by the local forest department that carries out the necessary actions according to the current regulations. The club is working with local environmental groups. On hole 8 th they have a biotope managed by local authorities. The club has the collaboration and help of local ornithologists.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		The local forest authority manages the woodland prioritizing local alpine species.
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	<p>The head greenkeeper has extensive experience and perfectly knows the specific conditions of the course, the sward is 45 % Agrostis, 40 % Fescue and 15% Poa annua.</p> <p>Poa pratensis, fine fescues and Lolium are predominantly species across fairways, and tees. Using mixes and varieties that are best suited to the location.</p> <p>The greens are overseeded with new Agrostis varieties more performant and tolerant to the alpine weather.</p>

	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		<p>Good cultural practices are undertaken to reduce thatch, reduce compaction and to encourage deeper rooting.</p> <p>Topdressing and hollow tinning are maintenance practices on the greens at the end of each season.</p>
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	<p>The head greenkeeper inspects the course with the fertilizer supplier every year discussing the best products and possibilities and take advantage of its 31 years of experience maintaining the course to choose the best products.</p> <p>The applications are made mainly of slow release granular fertilizers. Soil tests are performed on greens every year.</p>
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	<p>Mower cylinders and blades are sharpened 2 times a year in a neighbouring club. During the season daily adjustments and back lapping (to help maintain sharp edge) when necessary.</p> <p>Machines are washed every time after they have been used.</p> <p>Standard good practises (daily inspections, local weeding etc) are used to reduce chemical use to the minimum.</p>
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	<p>The club has some tolerance for disease and the use of pesticides is kept to a minimum, The head greenkeeper only treats when it is considered a major problem trying to minimize the need and use of pesticides. He scouts the course daily.</p> <p>Weather conditions and many years of experience are used to take the best decisions.</p>
	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	<p>Only legislated chemicals are used.</p> <p>The applications are made by the head greenkeeper, trained and qualified and uses appropriate protective equipment.</p> <p>Ecological conditions and weather are considered before the application is carried out.</p> <p>Untreated turf areas are used for disposal of diluted leftovers.</p>
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 club is perfectly respecting the Swiss law in terms of pollution prevention and emergency spill responses. The security perimeters established are respected. There are no treatments in the rough areas, wet areas and near sensitive areas. CIP: The club should redact an emergency spill responses plan. GEO to outline
	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	Contracts for disposal of hazardous waste from the facility are established with external local companies that are specialists in waste management. 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	Pesticides and fertilizers are mixed and loaded in the garage with concrete floor and drain connected to a collecting tank with oil separator. Hazardous waste is stored on bunded platforms prior to collection by a licenced waste contractor.
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	Head greenkeeper handles pesticides with a valid authorization (licenses). All fuel tanks are installed according to legislation. CIP – for the purposes of fully meeting this criteria point, the club has purchased a secure containment unit for pesticides. This should be placed correctly and monitored to ensure safe storage and access, with spill kit and response procedure information easily available.
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 wash bay outside the machine hall has an impermeable surface with oil separator and is collected by the sewer that takes the wastewater to the local treatment plan.

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	<p>Only irrigates when is necessary based on local knowledge and not many sprinklers on the course, only essential playing surfaces.</p> <p>In greens they practice spaced and abundant watering, trying to make the root system as deep as possible.</p> <p>The club haven't got an automatic irrigation system and the head greenkeeper must manually open valves every morning or night.</p> <p>Single row is used to irrigate fairways.</p>
R1.2 Maximise water efficiency	R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course	<p>Conduct regular irrigation performance checks;</p> <p>Provide staff training on efficient irrigation practices;</p> <p>Ensure effective application of water to target areas;</p> <p>Ensure irrigation schedules are informed by weather patterns and soil moisture analysis</p>	<p>The club haven't got any moisture sensor yet and is the daily inspection and experience the techniques used to determine the amount of water to apply on the course.</p> <p>The pumping is done by gravity from an upper drinking water tank.</p> <p>The course has 8 water meters for irrigation.</p> <p>The head greenkeeper has a small weather station in his office.</p> <p>CIP: It would be recommended actions to improve the current irrigation system and the use of at least battery-powered programmers that would facilitate the life of the head greenkeeper and make the irrigation work more efficient.</p> <p>CIP: It would be recommended to purchase a moisture meter to improve irrigation efficiency.</p> <p>CIP: Consider future planning and how the head greenkeeper might transfer his local knowledge of irrigation (and other subjects) to a more formal system for other / new members of staff</p>

	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	Clubhouse has been well constructed with efficient bathroom and shower fittings with flow restrictors and controls. Bill and volumes reviewed regularly. CIP: Consider water & irrigation audit. CIP: Install meters to separate water use between clubhouse and maintenance facility.
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 water consumption is read and reported to the municipality that is the supplier of freshwater to the clubhouse and course.
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 area of grass maintained is minimal and all the rest of the property is alpine coniferous forests. Some rough areas in holes 2, driving range, 8 and 9 are mowed by local farmers.
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	The club complies with the Swiss directives in terms of energy. They have an efficient heating system for the facilities as well as a good insulation system that allows reducing energy losses. The club is switching from more traditional energy consuming lighting to LED lighting. Motion sensors are installed on the ground floor of the club. The course is played mainly without buggies although they have 4 electric and 3 moto-buggies in case someone needs it. CIP: Continue replacing current bulbs with LEDs and study the possibility of extending motion sensors to other areas of the clubhouse.
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	Due to the alpine situation of the course, most of the electrical energy consumed comes from hydroelectric power plants in the area. There are two charging points for electric cars in the parking lot.
R3 Materials			
R3.1 Reduce materials demand	R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on necessity, including	Undertake a review of materials consumed	The club works with a local waste management plant for recycling. All waste is stored according to legislation. The greenkeepers built and area

	opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives		for composting the vegetal material collected and re-used on the course later.
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	Mainly local distributors are used, and some furniture of the golf course has been built by local companies (like the different wood benches). In the restaurant the use of local products is preferred and desired by members and visitors. The club has an environmental policy that includes taking environmental impacts into account when making 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	The club keeps internal bills and invoices of annual quantities of waste and recycled materials. Almost all waste is recycled or reused, including PET, aluminium, metals, glass, paper, and cardboard. Wood from removed trees is used for creating brush piles and habitat areas. Materials from the kitchen and maintenance area such as detergents, oils, lubricants, pesticides, and batteries are collected and disposed by specialized company.
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	The club complies with all Swiss waste management regulations. Authorized waste and recycling contractors are used for both housekeeping waste, industrial and hazardous waste.

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		<p>The property has numerous forest trails that cross it, all of them well marked and that are frequented by tourists and locals during all months of the year.</p> <p>Both walking and playing golf are true pleasures in a setting of amazing alpine forests.</p> <p>Every year on these dates mushroom collection days are organized in the nearby forests and at the end of the day they meet at the clubhouse restaurant where local experts help in identifying the catches.</p>
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		<p>The club provides staff with time and opportunities to volunteer, encouraging members to volunteer on tournaments, committees, and projects. Proof of this is that members are actively participating by providing information in the GEO certification process.</p> <p>Numerous members participated in the clean-up of the course after the past storms.</p>
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>The club communicates using social media, newsletter as well as daily through its website and the information panel of the clubhouse.</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		<p>Seniors, ladies, and juniors enjoy the facilities weekly.</p> <p>Along the course there are various public marked trails that are travelled by many residents especially on weekends.</p> <p>In the rough of hole 4 they have a nice sheltered wooden bench in the sun where locals enjoy watching the sport of golf and acting as Forecaddies.</p>
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>A very open attitude toward golfers and the local community.</p> <p>Free introductory courses are organized on Saturdays.</p> <p>Junior programme that regularly invite school groups to learn with the pro.</p> <p>The restaurant is open to the public and many people from the area use it.</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>Compliant with the extensive Swiss health and safety legislation for safe, ethical, equal, and legal working conditions.</p> <p>The club promote education and membership of the professional's associations. Continuous training and giving maximum stability to employees.</p> <p>Personal protection equipment and working clothing are provided.</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>The club communicates with a newsletter as well as daily through its website and the information panel of the clubhouse.</p> <p>The club truly promotes awareness within the employee community with respect to energy and safety aspects.</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	<p>Vulpera Golf is an open club that offers the opportunity to play golf to many citizens and tourist of the valley.</p> <p>Members and players are properly informed of all activities and actions carried out in the club.</p>

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