



GEO Certified[®]

GEO Certified[®] Report Golf Limpachtal

Prepared by Independent Verifier, Hector Forcen

Certified by GEO Foundation: April 2021

Valid until: April 2024

GEO Certified[®]

 **GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

“Golf Limpachtal is a professionally managed facility belonging to the Migros group, a Swiss company well known for its environmental and human values, bringing the sport of golf and its benefits to a new and wider audience.

The team at Golf Limpachtal are improving environmental management practices during the last years with diverse projects including habitat creation, wildflower meadows and data-modelling to help apply the correct quantities of fertilizers.

I look forward to seeing the results of the new clubhouse, I am sure will bring numerous advances in sustainability and energy efficiency. “

Hector Forcen

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 set for the future, 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

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	Limpachtal Golf Club is located in central Switzerland with some holes on the course belonging to the canton of Bern and others to the canton of Solothurn.

			<p>Gabriel Diederich, the Head Greenkeeper has prepared a list and map of animals that he has found on the golf course in recent years.</p> <p>CIP: The club could commission a more formal inventory of vegetation types.</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. There are no known legal designations on the property and is not aware of any rare or endangered species found on the site.
	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	There are several naturalized areas along the course. Their next project will be to reduce rough area with high maintenance that does not affect the play by naturalized areas using local species, they are currently reflecting on the different possible methods.
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	<p>The club is working, for several years, with local environmental groups.</p> <p>As a symbol of good cooperation and to confirm future goals in the field of sustainability, they planted a medlar tree together with partners from the environmental support group.</p> <p>Beavers were introduced in 2020 and quickly found a new home along the 15th hole. Their dams and structures are being preserved by the club to ensure they are safe and settled.</p>
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		Pruning remains are piled up in natural areas creating natural shelter areas for mammals and amphibians. Gabriel tries to promote with these practical weasel nesting areas that at the same time will help them to contain the moles populations.
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 60 % Agrostis and 40% Poa annua.</p> <p>Poa annua and Lolium are predominantly species across fairways, and tees.</p> <p>The greens are overseeded with new Agrostis varieties more performant and tolerant.</p>
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Good cultural practices are undertaken to reduce thatch, reduce compaction and to encourage deeper rooting.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	<p>Soil tests are carried out at the beginning of the season to know physical properties and need of nutrients.</p> <p>In terms of fertilization the applications are made mainly of liquid making own mixes and applying small amount weekly during the growing season. They follow a model being designed for the course depending weather and historical data. This model is being implement with the help from an external institute.</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>Mowers cylinders and blades are sharpened by the mechanic using high quality grinding equipment as much as needed to cut with the best quality possible daily.</p> <p>Machines are washed every time after they have been used.</p> <p>Dew moisture is removed to keep the turf as dry as possible.</p> <p>Standard good practices (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 Head Greenkeeper tries to minimize the need and use of pesticides.</p> <p>Weather conditions and past events are monitored and discussed along with the extensive site knowledge contained within the department to determine risks.</p> <p>The maintenance crew review and report any signs of stress or indications of pests and diseases.</p> <p>It is mainly snow mold & dollar spot the problems on the greens.</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	Only legislated chemicals are used. They are stored in a separate, locked, and secure storage. The applications are made by the Head greenkeeper and assistant who are trained and qualified using the necessary security measures. Ecological conditions and weather are considered before the application is carried out. Untreated turf areas are used for disposal of diluted leftovers.
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 lakes. CIP: The club should redact an emergency spill responses plan so the procedures are known by more people in a faster time.
	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. Some materials are recollected for recycling internally by the recycling department of the parent company MIGROS. This point will be improved with the new clubhouse construction planned for the next few years.
	N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from	Ensure wash areas are on impermeable, leak-free surfaces; Mixing and loading of pesticides and fertilisers over an impermeable surface;	Pesticides and fertilizers are mixed and loaded in the garage with concrete floor and drain connected to a collecting tank. In the workshop all drums with oils for machinery maintenance have their corresponding anti-spill containment system.

	maintenance facility operations	Triple rinse pesticide containers and applicators	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	All personal that handle pesticides have an education and valid authorizations (licenses). Personal protection equipment and the treatment machine is equipped with a closed cabin. Gabriel records products and treatments in the computer. Chemicals are maintained in a suitable room for the storage of phytosanitary products. Fire extinguishers are placed in locations with fire risks. They are inspected annually by a certified company. All fuel tanks are installed according to legislation and have approved inspections and controls.
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)	Previously reviewed.

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	Only irrigates when is necessary based on the Head Greenkeeper experience in combination with weather data and TDR moisture sensor. The club has an automatic irrigation system with block sprinklers on tees and greens. Some fairways have irrigation sprinklers installed and others have hose intakes and are watered by hand during the season.

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	The club have TDR moisture sensor and uses it to determinate the amount of water to apply. Thanks to an update of irrigation software done last year efficiency is improving. The pump is modern and helps to be more efficient with considerable savings in electricity consumption.
	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	Bill and volumes reviewed regularly. The new clubhouse will have upgrades to the latest and most efficient bathroom and shower fittings with flow restrictors and controls. CIP: Consider water & irrigation audit.
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 club has legal access to extract water from a well. According to the permit, the withdrawal is to be measured but there is no obligation to report to the authorities. The water consumption is read and reported to the municipality that is the supplier of freshwater to the clubhouses.
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 naturalized areas will be increased in the near future reducing maintained rough. There are natural areas that are not cut or only cut once a year.
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 property complies with the Swiss directives in terms of energy. A fire broke out in the clubhouse forcing the rapid construction of a temporary one while waiting to begin work on the new one that will be much more energy efficient. All the buggies are electric.
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	Major improvements in this point to occur with the construction of the new clubhouse.

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	The club works with a local waste management plant for recycling. All waste is stored according to legislation. They are composting some vegetable material, collected, and used by local farmers.
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 wooden 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. The club is part of MIGROS group with some central buying agreements which suppose an extra sustainability approach.
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. The club dispose different points with labelled bins around the facility and waste receptacle areas.
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		The club is involved in different projects. The day of my visit, a local well known sculptor artist was touring the course looking for the best places where to expose his works. This project will allow various artists to exhibit their works and golfers to enjoy them while playing golf. Migros company is very active in terms of sports activities and especially golf, has several clubs around Switzerland and its promoting golf and attracting new players to this sport.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		The club provides staff with time and opportunities to volunteer, encouraging golfers to volunteer on tournaments, committees, and projects.
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'	The club communicates using social media, newsletter as well as daily through its website and the information panel of the clubhouse. Being part of the company Migros they use the media of this to inform about the golf course and the activities.

C2 Golfers & Employees

C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		At Golf Limpachtal, the members' nutrition is important. With this in mind, they launched the "Fruit Box" campaign. In cooperation with the club restaurant, golfers were given a healthy snack to enjoy on their rounds. Seniors, ladies, and juniors enjoy the facilities weekly.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	The Migros company has a very democratic and open policy towards golf. Every year thousands of players enjoy its facilities

			and with its Migros card system they are promoting golf in Switzerland. The restaurant is open to the public and many people from the nearby industrial zone use it to eat daily.
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	Compliant with the extensive Swiss health and safety legislation for safe, ethical, equal, and legal working conditions. All employees can enjoy the different activities organized by the Migros company in its different branches such as schools or fitness centres for example. The club promote education and membership of the professional's associations. Continuous training and giving maximum stability to employees. Personal protection equipment and working clothing are provided.
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	The club communicates monthly with a newsletter as well as daily through its website and the information panel of the clubhouse. Members are quite proactive, and the club encourage them to promote the facility in the community. The club truly promotes awareness within the employee community with respect to energy and safety aspects. The club could talk about sustainability activities and GEO on the next Migros magazine.
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	Golf Limpachtal is an open club that offers the opportunity to play golf to many citizens of the area. Members and players are properly informed of all activities and actions carried out in the club. Migros company is promoting golf and the values of the sport all over the country with plenty of activities and actions in his different golfparcs and sport clubs.

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