



**GEO Certified<sup>®</sup>**

# GEO Certified<sup>®</sup> Report Golf Club Rheinblick

Prepared by independent verifier, Felix Rusterholz

Certified by GEO Foundation: January 2022  
Valid until: January 2025

**GEO Certified<sup>®</sup>**



 **GEO  
Foundation**  
Sustainability in and through golf

*“Based on the explications of the manager and the head greenkeeper, the motivated discussions with them and the extensive tour, I got the impression of a serious management and greenkeeping team.*

*To support the pesticide reduction strategy, the head greenkeeper uses a variety of organic fertilizers and bio-stimulants.*

*The grassland areas around the course are mostly tended by local farmers, but offer a significant opportunity to enhance habitats and increase biodiversity if managed appropriately.*

*I look forward to seeing more perennial flower meadows and a more differentiated grassland resulting from low nutrient management.”*

Felix Rusterholz

*(GEO accredited independent verifier)*



# Introduction

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GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that **Golf Club Rheinblick** 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 Club Rheinblick** 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 Club Rheinblick** should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, **Golf Club Rheinblick** 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

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## 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](http://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](http://www.isealalliance.org)



# Verifier's Report

The Sustainability Agenda for golf covers the following themes and action areas:

THEMES	ACTION AREAS
<b>Nature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitats &amp; Biodiversity</li> <li>• Turfgrass management</li> <li>• Pollution prevention</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water</li> <li>• Energy</li> <li>• Materials</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships &amp; Outreach</li> <li>• Golfing &amp; Employment</li> <li>• Advocacy &amp; Communications</li> </ul>

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	Site mapping and spatial representation is adequate, but could be updated and modernised.  CIP

			Produce new maps and consider drone images to understand turf and habitat compartments and how the relationship can be managed
	<b>N1.1.2 Knowledge of legal designations for protected areas, habitats and species</b>	Understand legal responsibilities for protected landscapes and species; Record and monitor protected, endangered, or rare species found on the site	No protected status known.  CIP Determine species and habitats present by researching local resources and collaborating with nature groups
	<b>N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage</b>	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	Great appreciation towards locality, their inhabitants and characteristic landscape; No knowledge of the existing official cultural property. From the start, the existing orchard has been formative in shaping overall appearance of the landscape surrounding the course.
<b>N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the course</b>	<b>N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the required area of managed turfgrass</b>	Observe, track and / or monitor golfer play	Because of the course's generous layout, numerous spaces outside the area of play are suitable for a range of biodiversity promotion measures.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Develop prairies alongside woods and copses into species-rich hedge bottoms</li> <li>⇒ Mow tree collar under taller, free-standing woody plants extensively, taking into account a potentially higher frequency of mice</li> <li>⇒ Install nest boxes on trees whose crown starts at least at 2 m height</li> <li>⇒ Create habitats, for example wood- and stone piles or coarse woody debris.</li> <li>⇒ Avoid fertilisation of meadows</li> <li>⇒ Facilitate the transformation of nutrient-rich meadows into nutrient-poor flower meadows → direct sowing</li> <li>⇒ Reduction of playing area also an option to consider</li> </ul>
<b>N1.3 Actively manage habitats for wildlife</b>	<b>N1.3.1 Projects to manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf</b>	Regularly review and follow a habitat management plan; Prioritise native species when planting and landscaping	There is information on locally present species available, but it is out-of-date.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Contact the Regional Nature Park Schaffhausen</li> <li>⇒ Initiate and support projects for species / habitat enhancement</li> <li>⇒ Enhance meadows with autochthonous seed</li> </ul>
<b>N1.4 Conserve key species</b>	<b>N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species</b>		Last botanical report: 09.08.1989 Last ornithological report: 02.07.1989  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Targeted measures are to be defined after new surveys</li> </ul> General measures are listed under N1.2

<b>N2 Turfgrass</b>			
<b>N2.1 Maintain optimum turf and soil health</b>	<b>N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors</b>	Select appropriate grass species for climate	The high quality of the turf reflects the head greenkeeper's high maintenance standards.
	<b>N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition</b>		Soil structure and biological activity in the soil are enhanced according to the specific on-site demands Comparison experiments would provide further information on efficiency
	<b>N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation</b>	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Nutrient analyses on playing area are performed. The head greenkeeper possesses good knowledge of local conditions, exposition, microclimatic influences etc., all valuable means to determine requirements and appropriate fertilisation.
<b>N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance</b>	<b>N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management</b>	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	Well informed management practices. Synthetic fungicide and herbicide is used alongside biological plant growth products.
<b>N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly</b>	<b>N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues</b>	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	Phytosanitary measures are taken in a reasoned and controlled way. Taken measures and used substances are accurately put on record. A large range and intensity of preventive phytosanitary measures is applied, resulting in an accordingly high-quality lawn.  The course contains large areas of agriculturally used land, which is mostly leased by neighbouring farms. The possibilities to regulate management executed by third parties are limited, but should be sought. The use of fertilizers in grasslands and meadows ought to be stopped. With the application of integrated pest management, preventive measures are put into focus.  ⇒ Considering individual damage thresholds. Resource reduction might be considered, in case that curative measures were accepted.  Implement contractual restrictions for tenant farmers to disclaim synthetic fertilizer
	<b>N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions</b>	Use only legally registered and approved products; Ensure staff are fully qualified and licenced to use pesticides;	Confirmed by head greenkeeper. Pesticides are stored and managed professionally. Tools seem to be maintained correctly. Phytosanitary measures are performed almost exclusively by the head greenkeeper, hereby strongly reducing any risks of misuse.

		Regularly calibrate and test applicators; Use appropriate protective equipment; Dilute and dispose of leftover product on untreated areas of turf	Cluster risk: The knowledge on phytosanitary measures and plant nutrition is solely kept by the head greenkeeper. This knowledge ought to be documented and accessible for other responsible people, should the head keeper drop out. This would permit upkeep of the high maintenance standard and pressing ahead with the plant protection concept.
<b>N3 Pollution Prevention</b>			
<b>N3.1 Prevent pollution across the entire site</b>	<b>N3.1.1 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from golf course operations</b>	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.	Operating fluids, phytosanitary substances and fertilizers are stored in accordance to law. Safety aspects are generally fulfilled. Access to the fertilizer storage ought to be controlled regularly. Respect buffer zones alongside open waterbodies. Vegetation alongside pond edge increases habitat quality, inhibits water pollution and eutrophication / growth of algae.  ⇒ Surface waters ought not be allowed to flow directly in standing water bodies (drainages alongside pond edge in direction of water intake) ⇒ Capillary barriers at the margins of the terrain impede water abstraction  Maintenance of underwater zone to be carried out during the mobile phase of underwater fauna (e.g. amphibians, reptiles, insects) from mid-August til end of September
	<b>N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations</b>	Ensure all hazardous materials are safely and securely stored; Ensure compliance with all required standards and systems for hazardous waste and wastewater discharge	Substances, including rechargeable batteries are stored safely. Disposal and purification of oils and fats are handled by a specialized enterprise.
	<b>N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from maintenance facility operations</b>	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	Garage is used in a professional manner. Washing station contains an oil separator. Handling (including disposal) is carried about in a controlled and professional manner.
<b>N3.2 Safely manage hazardous substances</b>	<b>N3.2.1 Legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances</b>	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;	Hazardous substances (e.g. pesticides) are mostly disclaimed. The stock of hazardous substances, as well as their usage, are reported. On-site substances are safely stored, including live rechargeable batteries, which are stored in accordance with fire prevention strategies.



		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	
<b>N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water</b>	<b>N3.3.1 Appropriate wastewater usage and discharge licences</b>	Wastewater discharge licence; Appropriate treatment of machinery wash water (impermeable surface, oil / grease / clipping separation)	A washing station with water-impermeable pavement is available for machine cleaning. The outflow passes an oil separator, which is periodically cleaned by a specialized firm.

<b>RESOURCES</b>			
<b>R1 Water</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Mandatory Practices</b>	<b>Verifier Notes</b>
<b>R1.1 Minimise water demand</b>	<b>R1.1.1 Measures to reduce the need to consume water</b>	Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces only	No alterations concerning irrigation are planned. Irrigation is operated by hand and therefore with highly precise application.
<b>R1.2 Maximise water efficiency</b>	<b>R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course</b>	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 sensors in use to optimize water use. The operation by hand is carried out based on meteorological information and the head greenkeeper's experience.
	<b>R1.2.2 Practical measures to use water more efficiently in buildings</b>	Audit water use regularly; Review bills frequently and look for irregularities; Encourage water-saving practices amongst staff and visitors;	Water use is recorded but no measures to reduce indoor water consumption are yet taken.  CIP The installation of water-saving aerators should be considered.

		Categorise and track water consumption	
<b>R1.3 Source water responsibly</b>	<b>R1.3.1 Measures towards alternative, lower quality sources of water</b>	Ensure appropriate water abstraction permit and reporting, as required	Run-off rainwater is collected and channelled into a publicly owned surface water. Its water quality is checked regularly by the community; no pollution registered to date.  CIP Regarding application of fertilizers on agricultural land by third parties, an in-house monitoring system is recommended.
<b>R2 Energy</b>			
<b>R2.1 Reduce energy demand</b>	<b>R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy consumed in course maintenance</b>	Minimise areas of managed turf to reduce mowing, irrigation, and turf inputs	Aside from playing areas, green space consists mainly of nutrient-rich hay meadows. A big part of them is fertilized with artificial fertiliser or manure coming from the proper farm. To reduce energy expenditure and enhance ecological quality, it is advised to prohibit third parties from applying fertilisers on the meadows.
<b>R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency</b>	<b>R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings</b>	Audit energy use regularly; Regularly review bills; Categorise and track energy consumption	The renovated building is structurally sound. Given its architecture, it is difficult to find potential to reduce energy expenditure. Improvements are nevertheless possible, if presently occurring energy use is monitored and scrutinized carefully.
<b>R2.3 Source energy responsibly</b>	<b>R2.3.1 Measures to source alternative, renewable forms of energy</b>	Determine potential sources of renewable energy in the area and on-site, through renewable energy providers	More than half of electricity used comes from renewable grid supply. To this day, no production of solar energy has been implemented because of a supposedly unsuitable architecture. At the same time, e-caddies and mowers run by electric motors are increasingly acquired.
<b>R3 Materials</b>			
<b>R3.1 Reduce materials demand</b>	<b>R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on necessity, including opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives</b>	Undertake a review of materials consumed	Plant conditioning products and sand are basically the only bought-in materials regularly demanded on the course. The collected waste consists mainly of packaging, waste by the audience and small quantities of green waste. Waste sorting is established.
<b>R3.2 Purchase responsibly</b>	<b>R3.2.1 Practical use of an ethical / environmental purchasing policy</b>	Adopt a sustainable, or ethical / environmental purchasing policy to maximise the use of locally sourced goods and goods made from	The club house offers different types of schnaps that are home-distilled from fruit growing on the golf club premises.

		recycled, recyclable and certified materials	
<b>R3.3 Reuse and recycle</b>	<b>R3.3.1 Waste stream separation for maximum recycling and re-use opportunity</b>	Demonstrate waste separation, reuse and recycling; Track how much waste goes to landfill, or is reused / recycled	Waste bins on the outdoor facility have been removed and a new recycle point has been installed on the audience area. Both measures allow for a good overview on waste quantities and composition.
<b>R3.4 Demonstrate legal compliance</b>	<b>R3.4.1 Compliance with all local and regional waste management regulations</b>	Use authorised waste and recycling contractor for general, hazardous, industrial and green waste	Reusable materials are processed by certified facilities.

<b>COMMUNITY</b>			
<b>C1 Outreach</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Mandatory Practices</b>	<b>Verifier Notes</b>
<b>C1.1 Diversify access and provide multi-functionality</b>	<b>C1.1.1 Social and recreational activities at the facility</b>		
<b>C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity</b>	<b>C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes</b>		Community project: Opportunity of creating a flower meadow supported by club members to increase the eco-sensitivity and visibility.
<b>C1.3 Establish active community partnerships</b>	<b>C1.3.1 Positive and constructive engagement with neighbours, the local community and other groups</b>	Create a 'sustainability working group'	Already close relationship to the township, supported by a board member, who is part of the municipal council as well as winemaker on site.  Recommended to establish is a close partnership with the regional Nature Parc Schaffhausen. Lots of synergy expected in ways of public relations, carrying out nature-monitoring and promoting eco-projects.

<b>C2 Golfers &amp; Employees</b>			
<b>C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing</b>	<b>C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities</b>		
<b>C2.2 Be open and inclusive</b>	<b>C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies</b>	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	Confirmed.
<b>C2.3 Employ fairly and safely, and provide career opportunities</b>	<b>C2.3.1 Ethical and legal employment, working conditions and professional development</b>	Follow all relevant national legislation and best practice for employment, health & safety etc	Internal communication within the greenkeeping team established. Working conditions seem to be attractive. Nevertheless it is hard to win new employees.
<b>C3 Communications</b>			
<b>C3.1 Engage golfers and members</b>	<b>C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and understanding amongst members and visitors</b>	Provide information on the facility's sustainability commitments, actions, or achievements	Periodically articles in the official newsletter, written by the head greenkeeper. Frequency could be increased.
<b>C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability</b>	<b>C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community</b>	Provide evidence of external communications and community engagement	Recommended to establish is a close partnership with the regional Nature Parc Schaffhausen. Lots of synergy expected in ways of public relations, carrying out nature-monitoring and promoting eco-projects.

## 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](http://www.sustainable.golf)