get nature positive

From Concrete to Biodiversity

Get Nature Positive – Technical documentation

With 'Get Nature Positive', biodiversity deficits in real estate can be equalized fully. This is done with newly created or preserved natural areas on site as well as compensation projects in Switzerland. The biodiversity offsetting model used achieves a net positive effect, meaning more biodiversity is created than is lost. Companies, private individuals and the public sector can thus make a contribution to a nature-positive world.

The mitigation hierarchy for nature conservation (avoid > minimise > restore > offset) is adhered to:

- No compensation for protected or ecologically irreplaceable habitats (avoid).
- Preservation of existing natural values (avoid) and the creation or restoration of ecologically valuable areas (restore) on site is incentivised. Minimum requirements also apply (see point 3).
- Development on ecologically valuable land is disincentivised (minimise). Building on ecologically valuable land requires significantly more compensation than, for example, building on sealed land.

1. Definition of the project perimeter

The project perimeter generally corresponds to one building plot/parcel.

- The project perimeter may cover several plots if a building or complex of buildings extends over several parcels.
- In the case of very large parcels of land, e.g. outside the building zone, the project perimeter may be reduced to the area affected by the project.
- If only some of the buildings within a parcel are to be certified, the parcel can be divided.
- If several buildings on a parcel are certified at the same time, each building must meet the conditions for certification. The buildings are listed individually on the certificate (street/house number).

2. Assessment of the initial state and nature areas that will be preserved

All areas located within the project perimeter are recorded and categorised into habitat types (Table 1). The individual sub-areas are multiplied by biodiversity factors, which are assigned to the biotope values. Built over areas with a biodiversity factor of 1 are replaced 1:1 with natural areas. In the case of ecologically more valuable areas with a biodiversity factor >1, the biodiversity factor ensures overcompensation.

Valuable natural areas with a biotope value of 4 or greater that are not affected by the construction project and are preserved may be deducted from the area to be compensated. The sum of all sub-areas minus the preserved nature areas results in the maximum area to be compensated in m^2.

If nature areas are destroyed shortly before the start of construction, e.g. tree felling, the original condition is determined using aerial photographs and a corresponding biodiversity factor is selected.

3. Assessment of construction project and deductions

New ecologically valuable nature areas created as part of the building project are multiplied by a equalising factor and may be deducted from the maximum area to be compensated (Table 2). The equalising factor rewards the creation of particularly complex habitats such as wetlands or watercourses. Compensation measures ordered by the municipality or the canton cannot be deducted.

4. Verification of minimum criteria

- Construction projects must be able to demonstrate a minimum of 15 % eligible nature area on site in relation to the surrounding area (surrounding area = project perimeter- building area). Exempted from this requirement are properties with the following sustainability labels with biodiversity criteria: SNBS, Natur & Wirtschaft and DGNB Platin.
- Construction projects on nature areas that are protected in accordance with Annex 1 NHV (Swiss nature conservation ordinance) and must be replaced, or those that have a biotope value of 6, cannot be compensated by GNP. GNP may grant exceptions in the case of nature areas that can be replaced within 25 years AND appropriate compensation is provided in consultation with the municipality or the canton.

5. Calculation of the compensation area

The nature area to be compensated is calculated from the maximum area to be compensated (step 2) minus the deductible nature area (step 3).

6. Matching with compensation project

The compensation area is measured in m^2. Compensation projects must be situated in Switzerland. Newly created or upgraded nature areas with a biotope value of 4 to 6 (Table 1) are eligible. The cost of creating new habitats varies from a few francs to over 1000.- per m^2. In order to incentivise the creation of more expensive nature areas such as watercourses, dry stone walls, small ecological structures or nesting boxes, these nature areas are multiplied by a equalising factor (Table 2).
To ensure that an improvement in ecological quality is actually achieved, areas with low ecological value, such as species poor pastures, fertilized meadows, arable land or monotonous woodland edges, are generally selected. It is also possible to upgrade areas that already have ecological value, such as species-poor *Arrhenatherum elatius* meadows to species-rich *Arrhenatherum elatius* meadows. A significant ecological improvement of at least one biotope value (Table 1) must be achieved. The quality requirements of the enhancement projects are regulated in 25-year contract between GNP and the farmer.

6. Calculation of the certificate fee and area rent

The certification fee is calculated on the basis of a fixed amount in Swiss francs per square metre to be offset. It amounts to CHF 10 per square metre for the pilot projects. 70% of the fee is used to finance the advice provided by GNP and the planning and realisation of the nature project by the project partner. Any surpluses are used to finance a biodiversity fund. 30% of the fee is used to finance the certification body and the administrative costs of GNP.
The quality of the restored nature area can be maintained in the long term with an annual area rent of CHF 0.20 per square meter. Alternatively, the area rent can be paid at once (CHF 5 per spare meter). The area rent is used to finance the monitoring scheme and a performance bonus for the project partner.

7. Calculation of the compensation quotient

The compensation quotient is used for internal control and is not communicated externally. Overcompensation of the area is achieved if the quotient is > 100. If this is not the case, the compensation area must be increased.
Compensation quotient = 100 * ((preserved nature area on site [m^2] + real, newly created nature area on site [m^2] + real compensation area [m^2]) / project perimeter [m^2]) > 100 %

8. Issue of the certificate by certification body

After signing the investors contract and paying the certificate fee, the certification body issues a certificate with the following content to the investor:

> XY AG has compensated for the area it used for the PROJECT in PLACE totalling x m^2 by creating ecologically valuable nature area in PLACE. The near-natural area on site totalling x m^2 is taken into account. The building is therefore 'nature positive' certified.

Special case : Compensation is carried out completely and independently on the project area

In this case, GNP does not have to create any new nature areas. However, there are costs for the area calculation and certification. The certificate fee is CHF 5000.-. The area is monitored every 5 years. A monitoring fee of CHF 1000.- is charged for this (or 5000.- for 25 years). Additional consultancy services are charged as required.

Table 1: Assessment of initial state

Biotope value initial state	Nature areas (habitat types)	Biodiversity factor for compensation
No value (Biotope value 0, 1)	Sealed surfaces Roads Buildings Stone paving Sports ground Construction site Animal enclosure Neophytic meadow	1
Low ecological value (Biotope value 2)	Woodland edge lacking ecological structures Wood storage area Artificial/non-natural stream Artificial/non-natural river Ornamental pond, sewage treatment plants, SABA Intensively manged, fertilised meadow and pasture Field Vegetable and other horticultural land Flower gardening area Tree nursery Trellis fruit plantation Berry plantation Vineyard without terraces Agricultural storage area Species-poor ruderal meadow Species-poor lawn (utility lawn) Ornamental shrubbs/ hedge of predominantly non-native woody species Ornamental hedge/ pruned hedge Settlement grove of predominantly non-native tree species Tree grid without tree discs Tree grid with lawn Tree-rich/grid with gravel Flower bed/herbaceous border Fruit and vegetable garden Low-species ornamental garden Intensively managed park Other sports, play and leisure facilities Green space with lacking ecological structures Low-species sedum roof vegetation Fertilised roof vegetation Area with unpaved wall gravel or sand Commercial area (small businesses and commercial storage areas)	1.1

Medium ecological value (Biotope value 3)	Woodland edge lacking ecological structure with potential for enhancement Blackberry shrub Successional shrub Heavily impaired stream Heavily impaired river Heavily impaired water body of natural origin Tall herbaceous meadow with goldenrod Lean bracken meadow Structurally poor and species-poor rough pasture Intensive grassland on former fenland sites Shady nutrient-poor meadow Species-rich fallow Terraced vineyard Ruderal grassland in nutrient-rich, fresh to moist locations Ruderal grassland of nutrient-rich, fresh to moist sites with woody plants Semi-ruderal grass and herbaceous meadow in moist locations Semi-ruderal grass and herbaceous meadow in medium locations Species-rich lawn (flowering lawn) Ornamental shrubbery/hedge of predominantly native woody species lacking ecological structures Urban grove of predominantly native tree species lacking ecological structures Tree grid with tree discs (incl. asphalt in between) Tree grid with old trees without tree discs Tree grid with ornamental hedge Grid of trees with fertilised grassland Cottage garden House garden Parklike cemetery Natural stone wall Species-rich sedum roof vegetation	1.5
Ecologically valuable (Biotope value 4)	Intensively managed forest Mature single tree Avenue with mature trees High-trunk orchard with fertilised meadow Watercourse Little affected stream Little affected river Meadow ditch Near-natural, nutrient-rich water body Moist *Arrhenatherum elatius* meadow Species-poor *Arrhenatherum elatius* meadow Semi-ruderal grassland and herbaceous meadow in alternately moist locations	1.75

	Structurally rich ornamental shrubbery/hedge of predominantly native woody species Structurally-rich grove of predominantly native tree species Tree grid with ruderal undergrowth Tree grid with mature trees and tree discs Tree grid with mature trees and ornamental hedge Tree grid with mature trees and lawn Grid of trees with mature trees and gravelled ground Tree grid with a meadow of fruit trees Grid of trees with mature trees and a meadow Tree grid with species-rich, semi-ruderal herbaceous meadow Species-rich garden with mature trees Allotment/community garden Structurally rich green area Ruderal roof vegetation Meadow-like roof vegetation	
Ecologically very valuable (Biotope value 5)	Stepped forest edge Scrub of dry and warm locations mesophilic shrubs willow marsh shrubs shrubby hedge Shrub-tree hedge Tree hedge Near-natural field grove High-trunk orchard of ecological quality level II (CH agricultural scheme) with *Arrhenatherum elatius* meadow Natural/near-natural stream Natural/near-natural river Near-natural small water body Near-natural, nutrient-poor standing water of natural origin Nutrient-rich swamp Population of blunt-leaved rush (*Carex atrofusca*) Pioneer vegetation of muddy wetland Vegetation on natural rock *Arrhenatherum elatius* meadow with ecological quality level II (CH agricultural scheme) Structurally rich rough pasture Ruderal meadow in dry and warm locations with woody plants Semi-ruderal grass and herbaceous meadow in dry locations Tree grid with mature trees and ruderal undergrowth Tree grid with mature trees and *Arrhenatherum elatius* meadow Tree row/grid with *Arrhenatherum elatius* meadow of ecological quality level II (CH agricultural scheme) Tree grid with mature trees and species-rich, semi-ruderal herbaceous meadow	2

	Wildlife garden Old landscape park	
	Caltha palustris meadow typical willow meadow shrub Ruderal vegetation of dry and warm locations *Phalaris arundinacea* riverside reedbed Sweet-grass (*glyceria sp.*) reedbed Tall herbaceous meadow with *Filipendula ulmaria*	Exclusion because of legal obligation to replace
Hardly or not at all replacable (Biotope value 6)	Forest types protected by Swiss Nature Conservation Law (NHG) Tapered woodland edge exposed to the south Shrub hedge with ecological quality II level (CH agricultural scheme) Shrub-tree hedge with ecological quality level II (CH agricultural scheme) High trunk garden with old trees High-trunk orchard with nutrient-poor meadow Tree row/grid with old trees on *Arrhenatherum elatius* meadow with ecological quality level II (CH agricultural scheme) River gravel pioneer meadow Sedimentation area of nutrient-poor water body with underwater vegetation Floating wetland vegetation Reedbed with siltation area *Schonoplectus lacustris* reedbed Typha/bulrushes Reed beds Large sedge-reeds with hummocks (*Magnocaricion*) Large sedge-meadow outside water level fluctuations Large sedge-reed with marsh sedge Large sedge-reed bed with rush Large sedge-reed with hairy sedge Davall's sedge reed Head rush reed (*Schoenus nigricans*) Small sedge meadow with hedgehog grass (*Carex flava*) Acidic small sedge meadow Moist moor grass meadow (*Molinia cerulae*) with small sedges Dry moor grass meadow (*Molinia cerulae*) with small sedges Dry moor grass meadow (*Molinia cerulae*) on peat soil Chalk heath Other rough grassland Alternately dry nutrient-poor meadow Moderately dry nutrient-poor meadow Structurally rich species-rich rough pasture	Exclusion because biotope value 6 and/or legal obligation to replace

Source: Quadra GmbH/Grünstadt Zürich, Biotope values from Stadtgrün, Stadt St.Gallen 2024

Table 2: Eligible ecologically valuable nature areas for construction and compensation projects

Habitats and structures	Unit	Biotope value	costs/m²	Equalising factor
Ecologically valuable forest (e.g. forest pasture, natural or special forest reserves)	Area in m²	5-6	Few CHF	1
Structurally rich rough pasture (5-20% structures)	Area in m²	5	Few CHF	1
Tall herbaceous meadow e.g. with *Filipendula ulmaria*	Area in m²	5	5.10	1
Arrhenatherum elatius meadow (typical hay meadow)	Area in m²	4-5	4.50	1
Moist Arrhenatherum elatius meadow	Area in m²	4	5.20	1
Alternating dry nutrient-poor meadow	Area in m²	6	6	1
Moderately dry nutrient-poor meadow	Area in m²	6	6	1
Structurally rich, species-rich rough pasture ecological quality level II (5-20% structures, 6 indicator plants)	Area in m²	6	10.-	1
High-trunk orchards (ecological quality level II criteria, without additional areas)	100 m²/ tree	5-6	10.- (incl. meadow sowing)	1
Single trees, avenues or grove with native species	Potential crown area in m²	4-5	50-1000.- per tree	2
Wild hedges with a diverse mix of native species including herbaceous buffer strips	Area in m²	5	80.-	2
Near-natural water body, small biotopes or ponds with buffer strips	Area in m² plus 2 m buffer	4-6	100.-	2
Species-rich ruderal meadows	Area in m²	5	30-75.-	2
Small ecological structures	Area in m²	not assessed	100.-	2
Nesting boxes for birds or bats	1 m² per nesting box	not assessed	30-170.-	2
Tapered woodland edge	Linear meter, varying depth	5-6	100.-/m	2
Near-natural streams	Area in m² incl. watercourse area	5	1000.-/m	3
Non-grouted dry stone walls	Vertical surface of wall view	not assessed	500-1000.-	3
Other very valuable habitats such as dry and semi-dry meadows, floodplains, fens, etc.	Area in m²	6	-	1-3
Additional recognized nature areas for construction project (not part of compensation projects)				
Species-rich flowering lawn	Area in m²	3	4.-	0.5
Well-established, near-natural roof vegetation with 12 cm substrate thickness	Area in m²	4	20-60.-	0.5

Well-established, near-natural roof vegetation with at least 20 cm substrate thickness	Area in m^2	4	20-60.-	1
Near-natural retention basins	Area in m^2	3-6	not assessed	1
Species poor *Arrhenatherum elatius* meadow	Area in m^2	4	4.50	1
Facades or walls planted with native plants	Vertical area in m^2	not assessed	70-300.-	1
Wild herbaceous bed (semi-ruderal herbaceous meadow)	Area in m^2	4	50.-	2

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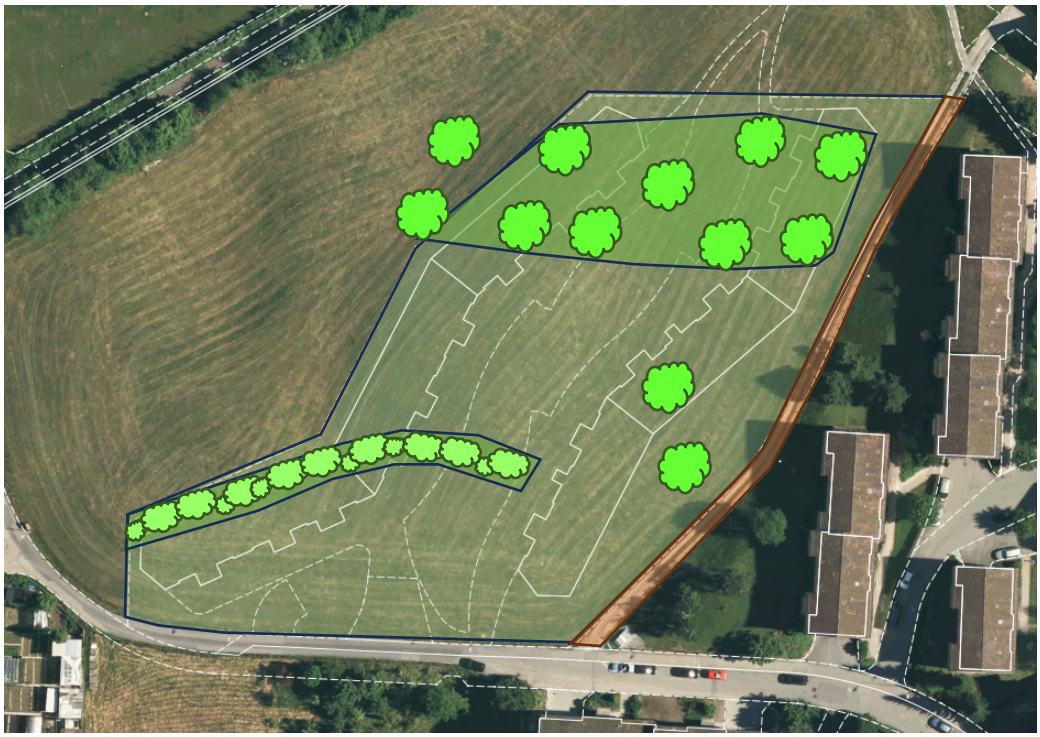
Case study

Residential development with ecological valuable surroundings on ecologically valuable agricultural land

Step 1: Definition of project perimeter

The project perimeter corresponds to the plot size = 8437 m2

Step 2: Assessment of the initial state



Sub-areas of the plot in its original state

Biotope type	Area [m^2]	Biodiversity factor	Adjusted area [$m^{2\ eq.}$]
Gravel path	410	1	410
Intensivly manged, fertilized meadow	5347	1.1	5881.7
Shrub hedge without ecological quality	470	2	940
High-trunk orchard on a fertilized meadow	2090	1.75	3657.5
Old single tree	120	1.75	210
Total	8397		**11'099.2**

Deduction of preserved habitats

Biotope type	Area [m^2]	Biodiversity factor	Adjusted area [$m^{2\ eq.}$]
Old single tree	80	1.75	140
Total			**140**

The maximum area to be compensated is 11'099.2 m^{2eq} - 140 m^{2eq} = **10'959.2 $m^{2\ eq.}$**

Step 3: Assessment of the building project and deductions

Sub-areas of the construction project

Biotope type	Area [m^2]	Equalising factor	Deductible area [$m^{2\ eq.}$]
Buildings	4870	0	0
Gravel path	410	0	0
lawn	2482	0	0
Species-rich flowering lawn	200	0.5	100
Arrhenatherum elatius meadow with quality level II (CH agricultural scheme)	1025	1	1025
Native shrubs and trees	30	2	60
Nesting boxes	2	2	4
Total			**1189**

Step 4: Verification of minimum criteria

Minimum elegible nature area on site:
Sourrounding area: (project perimeter – building area) = 8437 m^2 – 4870 m^2 = 3567 m^2
Elegible nature area (real area in m^2): 1257 m^2
Proportion of elegible nature area to surrounding area: 100 * 1257/3567 = 35.2%
-> more than 15 % of the surrounding area are eligible nature areas: **Criterion 1 fulfilled**

No protected or irreplaceable habitats affected: **Criterion 2 fulfilled**

Step 5: Calculation of the compensation area

Maximum area to be compensated	10‘959.2 $m^{2\ eq.}$
Deductible natural area	- 1189 $m^{2\ eq.}$
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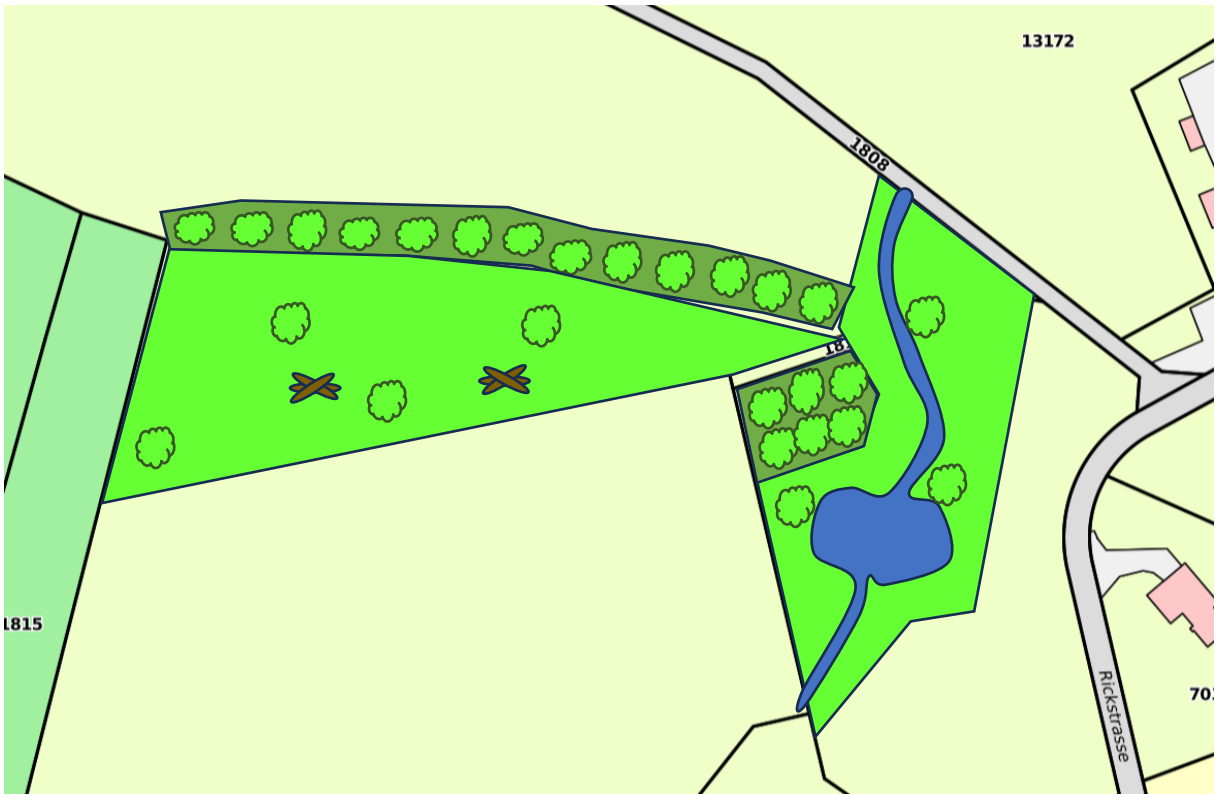
Total area to be compensated	9770.2 $m^{2\ eq.}$

Step 6: Matching with nature restoration project



Sub-areas of the compensation area

Biotope type	Area [m^2]	Equalising factor	Adjusted area [$m^{2\ eq.}$]
High-stem orchard with ecological quality II level (CH agricultural scheme)	1270	1	1270
Stream with buffer zone	435	3	1305
Near-natural standing water with buffer zone	668	2	1336
Structurally rich rough pasture with ecological quality level II (CH agricultural scheme)	5860	1	5860
	8233		**9771**

Step 7: Calculation of fees

Certificate fees: **97'702.-**
Area rent per year: **1954.40**
Total area rent over 25 years: **48851.-**

Step 8: Calculation of compensation quotient

Compensation quotient = 100 * ((preserved natural areas on site [80 m^2] + real, newly created natural areas on site [1257 m^2] + real compensation area [8233 m^2]) / project perimeter [8437 m^2]) = **113 %** (overcompensation achieved)

Overcompensation of the area is achieved if the compensation quotient is > 100. If this is not the case, the compensation area must be increased.

Step 9: Issuing the certificate by certifying body

XY AG has compensated for the area it used for the residential development **Im Ried** totalling **8233 m^2** by creating new ecologically valuable habitats in **Pfäffikon ZH**. The near-natural area on site totalling **1337 m^2** is taken into account. The residential development is **'nature positive'** certified.