



BATHURST  
REGIONAL  
COUNCIL



# **Perthville Black Gum (*Eucalyptus aggregata*) Offset Site**

## **Annual Condition Assessment Report**

Bathurst Regional Council  
August 2024

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# Introduction

During August 2024, a condition assessment was carried out by Bathurst Regional Council (BRC) on 148 planted Black Gum's (*Eucalyptus aggregata*) at the Perthville Black Gum Offset Site, 8km south of Bathurst NSW.

The assessment is part of a twenty-year monitoring program as per the requirements of the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act (NSW)* (EP&A Act) granted concurrence.

The assessment will allow BRC to determine existing vegetation condition three years on from initial planting in 2020 and assist BRC to understand how the trees are responding to planting treatment. The assessment will also clearly demonstrate that the project is achieving the primary objectives of the NSW Department of Planning & Environment (DPE) endorsed Perthville Black Gum Offset Site Offset Management Plan (OMP) (Bathurst Regional Council, 2020).

As per the requirements of the EP&A Act granted concurrence and OMP, the results of monitoring will be submitted in an annual report to the DPE and will be available online via the BRC website for view by the public.

# Monitoring Method

A revegetation condition assessment methodology devised by Skillset Landworks Pty Ltd was used to score the health condition of each individual tree. Carried out by Council's environmental staff, each tree was assigned a condition score based on the criteria presented in **Table 1**.

**Table 1** - Plant condition assessed using a point index assessment method.

Score	Description
3	Tree is alive and in a healthy condition. Tree is actively growing with no signs of significant stress or damage.
2	Tree is alive and in a moderately healthy condition. Tree is still actively growing but showing some evidence of stress.
1	Tree is alive but showing significant signs of stress that are impacting growth.
0	Tree is dead with no evidence of growth.

In addition to the above, it was noted if each individual tree exhibits any visual signs of the following:

- Browsing by herbivores and/or insects
- Frost damage
- Evidence of dehydration
- Evidence of vandalism (specific to people)
- Evidence of nutrient deficiency
- Evidence of damage by parasite

General observational notes were also taken to provide further information on the current condition of the offset site.

As per industry environmental monitoring guidelines, five (5) fixed photo monitoring points were established to provide baseline data on the ecological condition of the site prior to project commencement in February 2020. The projects fourth year of photo monitoring was conducted, almost four years on from the planting of the Black Gums in September 2020, to aid in assessing the impact of the environmental works over the life of the project and allow Council to make adaptive management measures, if required.

In addition to photo monitoring, weed mapping was undertaken to establish current site condition, to assess the effectiveness of weed management as well as the expected recovery of native vegetation following the removal of woody and herbaceous weeds. Although photo monitoring will provide a series of visual records of gross changes in vegetation it will not produce the quantitative records preferred for monitoring hence its use. Five (5) point quadrants using 10m line transects were located at respective photo monitoring points to ensure that different areas of the project site were sampled.

Surveys using indirect method of scat and track identification were conducted to determine the presence of vertebrate pests, livestock and macropods including kangaroo and/or wallaby.

## Results

### Revegetation

Overall condition ratings identified that 87.2% (129) of the trees surveyed received the highest health score of three (3) with trees alive and in healthy condition, and actively growing with no signs of significant stress or damage. 6.76% (10) of the trees surveyed received a health score of two (2) with trees alive, in a moderately healthy condition, and actively growing, however showing some evidence of stress. 1.35% (2) of trees surveyed received a health score of one (1) with trees alive but showing significant signs of stress that are impacting on growth. 4.73% (7) of the trees surveyed received the lowest health score of zero (0) as the trees were dead with no evidence of growth.

The height and growth of trees was also surveyed with 33.1% (49) trees measuring 4m in height, 31.1% (46) trees measuring 2m in height, 26.4% (39) trees measuring 3m in height, 5.4% (8) trees measuring 5m in height and 1.4% (2) trees measuring 1m in height. 5.4% (8) surveyed exhibited stunted growth, however all but three (3) trees received the highest health score rating and exhibited the early stages of new growth.

One (1) tree surveyed showed evidence of vandalism.

The total survival rate of trees surveyed was 95.1% (139).

### Weed Management

A total of five (5) monitoring points were surveyed with all monitoring points showing no evidence of target invasive weed species. The most prominent non-native grass species identified across the site was Prairie Grass (*Bromus sp.*) with a median occurrence rate of 46.7%, with Monitoring Point 2 having the highest occurrence rate of 100% and Monitoring Point 5 having the lowest occurrence rate of 16.7%. Clover (*Trifolium sp.*), Phalaris Grass (*Phalaris sp.*), Dock (*Rumex sp.*), *Plantago sp.* and Dandelion (*Taraxacum sp.*) were also identified across all monitoring points with a median occurrence rate of 10%.

### Pest Management

Of all trees surveyed, 95.3% (141) exhibited partial to full canopy insect damage, with 2% (3) hosting psyllids, ants, and accompanying black sooty mould.

Evidence of rabbit shallow diggings and scats were identified at the base of one (1) tree (no.64) and within the north-eastern quarter of the offset site.

## Discussion

As with the previous year's results, revegetation over the fourth year of the project has maintained a high survival rate of 95.1% (136) with only seven (7) dead trees at the end of the reporting period. This is well above the minimum required survival rate of 80% identified in the Perthville Black Gum Offset Site OMP TARP.

Health scores of surveyed trees saw an increase of 23.7% on the previous year's data of 63.5% (94) for the highest health score of three (3), with 87.2% (129) trees receiving this high health score, whilst the remainder of trees surveyed scored a moderate or low score of two (2) or less. This was also the first year that tree height was measured with eight (8) trees (5.4%) at the site measuring five (5) meters in height with the median height of all trees surveyed was three (3) meters (26.4%). Whilst 5.4% (8) of trees exhibited stunted growth, all but three (3) trees received the highest health score rating and exhibited the early stages of new growth.

From observations, La Niña conditions between 2020-2023, flooding in November 2022 and the subsequent depositing of alluvial soils rich in humus and organic nutrients, appears to have increased water retention capacity across the site aiding in the uptake of nutrients by the trees. Such conditions tend to promote or assist a climate conducive to healthy vegetation exhibited through the presence of mature foliage (Figure 1) and taller than anticipated tree height (Figure 2), as well as high survival rates of revegetation.



**Figure 1 - (left)** Mature foliage is now present on most Black Gum trees at the offset site, some 4 years after planting.

**Figure 2 - (right)** The tallest Black Gums at the site reach heights of 5m and are located within 20-30m of Queen Charlottes Vale Creek.

Regular weed control works carried out across the site has made a significant contribution to nil (0%) target weed species notably Willow (*Salix sp.*), Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus sp.*) and Poplar (*Populus sp.*) being present at the site. Although surveys conducted via the point quadrant method identified Prairie Grass (*Bromus sp.*) as a dominant non-invasive weed species with a median occurrence rate of 46.7%, regular slashing between plantings during the growing season will ensure minimal competition with the Black Gums and minimize seed set of the grass and other perennial and herbaceous weed species across the site.

Impacts by invertebrate pest species continue to present challenges in the management of the Black Gums with damage from insects including irregular holes, curled leaves, and chewed leaf margins observed on 95.3% (141) of trees surveyed, with psyllids, aphids and ants observed on 6.76% (310) of trees with accompanying black sooty mould. La Niña conditions between 2020-2023, and milder conditions during the summers of the last four years, tend to promote an environment conducive to increased invertebrate pest activity. It is anticipated that with the establishment and maturity of the Black Gums, and an increase in diversity and predatory activity by insectivorous bird species (as observed at the site), that potential impacts by invertebrate pest species would be negligible.

Although not significant enough to trigger contingency measures as per the Perthville Black Gum Offset Site OMP TARP i.e. vertebrate pest control program, the presence of rabbit scratching's and scats at the base of one (1) tree (no.64) and within the north-eastern quarter of the offset site will require regular inspections to ensure that there is not a 20% loss of Black Gums. Whilst the removal of mesh tree guards will be applied to trees exhibiting larger trunk diameter and maturity, mesh tree guards will be retained on trees that are 2m or less in height to prevent browsing by vertebrate pest species.

Upgrading of fencing including the installation of a locked gate along North Street, and the installation of interpretative signage as per the Perthville Black Gum Offset Site OMP, have yet to be undertaken due to increased contractor rates, manufacturing costs, and budgetary constraints. It is proposed that these works will be undertaken when funding becomes available.

## Recommendations

1. Dead trees replaced with Black Gums or Box-Gum Grassy Woodland PCT species as per OMP TARP.
2. Repair or replace damaged mesh tree guards as per OMP TARP.
3. Increase slashing of groundcover across site during growing season to reduce competition by perennial and annual non-native grasses.
4. Replace degraded fencing along North Street with new fence posts, stock netting, sighter wire and gate.
5. Install interpretative signage at the North Street entrance to educate the public on the project.
6. Continue to monitor trees for leafhopper, sawfly, psyllids, ants and corresponding black sooty mould and implement control program as per updated OMP TARP.
7. Continue to monitor rabbit activity and implement contingency measures if triggered as per updated OMP TARP.

## Reference

Bathurst Regional Council, 2020. *Perthville Black Gum Offset Site Offset Management Plan*, Bathurst NSW Australia: Bathurst Regional Council.

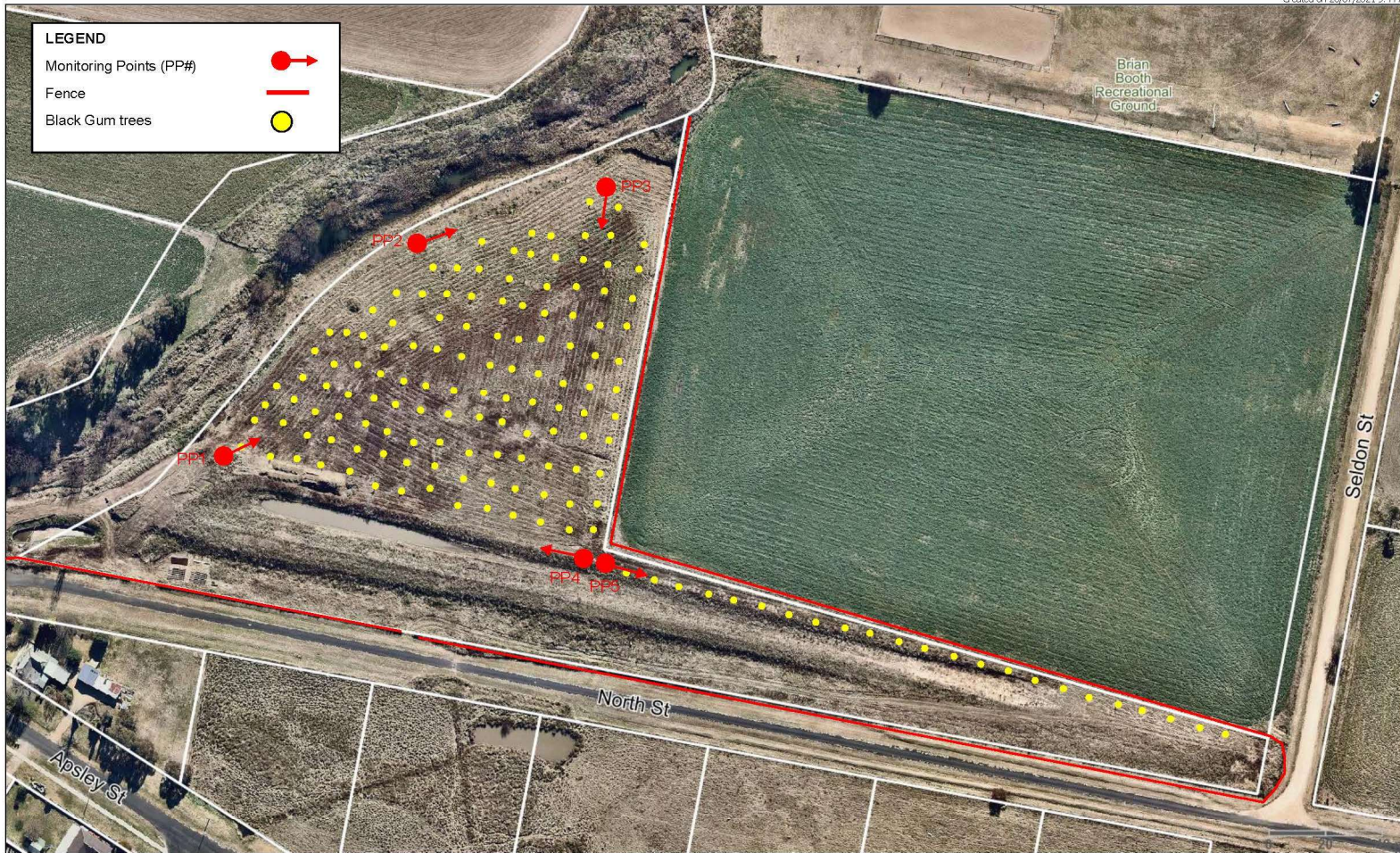
## Attachments

Perthville Black Gum Offset Site - Site Map and Monitoring Points

Perthville Black Gum Offset Site Photo Point Monitoring Datasheets PP1-PP5

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**Important Notice!**

This map is not a precise survey document. Accurate locations can only be determined by a survey on the ground.

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Drawn By: Kristie Kearney

Date: 28/07/2021

Projection: GD494 / MGA zone 55


Map Scale: 1:1792 @ A4

**Perthville Black Gum Offset Site  
 Site Map & Monitoring Points**





## Perthville Black Gum Offset Site Photo Point Monitoring

Photo Point ID	Site	Bearing	Longitude	Latitude
PP1	North Street, Perthville	72°	149.551453	-33.486819
Baseline (before works)	End of Year 1	End of Year 2	End of Year 3	
Date	Date	Date	Date	
7 February 2020	27 August 2021	10 August 2022	11 August 2023	
Description	Description	Description	Description	
Baseline photo prior to site preparation, weed control and planting of Black Gum	12 months after planting of Black Gums, 4 months after slashing of grass between plantings.	24 months after planting Black Gums, grass short due to recent slashing.	36 months after planting Black Gums, grass short due to regular slashing.	
				
Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	
Floodplain between North Street flood levee and Queen Charlotte Vale Creek with stockpiled soil and road base from flood levee mitigation works. Ground highly compacted due to heavy machinery used on site.	Evidence of soil compaction from heavy machinery, and unauthorised storage of concrete form work from flood levee mitigation works. 57% of 10m line transect comprising of dead grass species, 30% bare earth, 10% unidentified grass species and 3% Clover. 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect.	Evidence of recent flood due to water inundation and detritus. 80% of 10m line transect comprising of Phalaris, 10% Indian Mustard, 3% Purple top, Prairie grass and dead grass respectively. 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect. Significant growth on Black Gums with 0.7% trees exhibiting early stages of flower buds, and 44% having adult (mature) foliage.	Evidence of recent floods (Nov 22) with detritus. 67% of 10m line transect comprising of Clover, 17% Prairie grass and dead grass respectively. 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect. Although 16% of Black Gums are stunted in growth, 92% are exhibiting new foliage growth, and 10.8% trees exhibiting unopened flower buds.	


## Perthville Black Gum Offset Site Photo Point Monitoring

Photo Point ID	Site	Bearing	Longitude	Latitude
PP1	North Street, Perthville		149.551453	-33.486819
End of Year 4	End of Year 5	End of Year 6	End of Year 7	
Date	Date	Date	Date	
28 August 2024				
Description	Description	Description	Description	
48 months after planting Black Gums, grass short due to regular slashing.				
				
Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	
40% of 10m line transect comprising of clover, 23.3% prairie grass ( <i>Bromus sp.</i> ) and dead grass respectively, 6.7% dock ( <i>Rumex sp.</i> ) and <i>Plantago sp.</i> respectively, and 3.3% Black Gum. 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect. 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect. Although 95.3% of Black Gums show evidence of insect damage, 87.2% of trees scored the highest health rating of 3.				





## Perthville Black Gum Offset Site Photo Point Monitoring

Photo Point ID	Site	Bearing	Longitude	Latitude
PP2	North Street, Perthville	71°	149.552308	-33.486112
Baseline (before works)	End of Year 1	End of Year 2	End of Year 3	
Date	Date	Date	Date	
7 February 2020	27 August 2021	10 August 2022	11 August 2023	
Description	Description	Description	Description	
Baseline photo prior to site preparation, weed control and planting of Black Gum	12 months after planting of Black Gums and ongoing monthly maintenance, 4 months after slashing of grass between plantings.	24 months after planting of Black Gums, grass short due to recent slashing.	36 months after planting Black Gums, grass short due to regular slashing.	
				
Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	
Riparian zone along Queen Charlotte Vale Creek. Significant weed growth including <i>Brassica sp.</i> <i>Rumex sp.</i> <i>Foeniculum sp.</i> and <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> . Ground highly compacted due to heavy machinery use on site. Erosion control barrier from flood levee mitigation works visible however not functioning proper due to damage.	Riparian area of Queen Charlotte Vale Creek. Grass understorey short due to previous slashing of grass and dormancy of perennial grasses. 70% of 10m line transect comprising of dead grass species, and 30% Prairie Grass ( <i>Bromus sp.</i> ). 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect.	Evidence of recent flooding due to water inundation and Detritus. 97% of 10m line transect comprising of Phalaris, and 3% comprising of Dock ( <i>Rumex sp.</i> ) 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect. Significant growth on Black Gums with 0.7% trees exhibiting early stages of flower buds, and 44% having adult (mature) foliage.	Evidence of recent floods (Nov 22) with detritus. 83% of 10m line transect comprising of Prairie grass ( <i>Bromus sp.</i> ) and 17% Phalaris. 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect. Although 16% of Black Gums are stunted in growth, 92% are exhibiting new foliage growth, and 10.8% trees exhibiting unopened flower buds.	


## Perthville Black Gum Offset Site Photo Point Monitoring

Photo Point ID	Site	Bearing	Longitude	Latitude			
PP2	North Street, Perthville		149.5523455	-33.4860883			
End of Year 4		End of Year 5		End of Year 6		End of Year 7	
Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
28 August 2024							
Description	Description	Description	Description	Description	Description	Description	Description
48 months after planting Black Gums, grass short outside of no mow zone (riparian zone) due to regular slashing.							
							
Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments
100% of 10m line transect comprised of prairie grass ( <i>Bromus sp.</i> ). 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect. Although 95.3% of Black Gums show evidence of insect damage, 87.2% of trees scored the highest health rating of 3.							





## Perthville Black Gum Offset Site Photo Point Monitoring

Photo Point ID	Site	Bearing	Longitude	Latitude
PP3	North Street, Perthville	151°	149.552833	-33.485959
Baseline (before works)	End of Year 1	End of Year 2	End of Year 3	
Date	Date	Date	Date	
7 February 2020	27 August 2021	10 August 2022	11 August 2023	
Description	Description	Description	Description	
Baseline photo prior to site preparation, weed control and planting of Black Gum	12 months after planting of Black Gums and ongoing monthly maintenance, 4 months after slashing of grass between plantings.	24 months after planting Black Gums, grass short due to recent slashing	36 months after planting Black Gums, grass short due to regular slashing.	
				
Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	
Looking south toward North Street. Confluence of Queen Charlotte Vale Creek and drainage channel behind. Stockpiled soil and road base from flood levee mitigation works. Significant weed growth including <i>Brassica sp.</i> <i>Rumex sp.</i> <i>Foeniculum sp.</i> and <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> . Ground highly compacted due to heavy machinery use on site.	Grass understorey short due to previous slashing of grass and dormancy of perennial grasses. 63.3% of 10m line transect comprising Prairie Grass ( <i>Bromus sp.</i> ), 30% dead grass species, 3.3% bare earth and 3.3% Dock ( <i>Rumex sp.</i> ). 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect. Sightings of Rabbit within the vicinity however no visible signs of scats, diggings or burrows.	Evidence of recent flooding due to water inundation and detritus. 97% of the 10m line transect comprising of Phalaris, and 3% comprising of Dandelion ( <i>Taraxacum sp.</i> ) 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect. Significant growth on Black Gums with 0.7% trees exhibiting early stages of flower buds, and 44% having adult (mature) foliage.	Evidence of recent floods (Nov 22) with detritus. 87% of 10m line transect comprising of Prairie grass ( <i>Bromus sp.</i> ), 10% dead grass and 3% Dock ( <i>Rumex sp.</i> ). 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect. Although 16% of Black Gums are stunted in growth, 92% are exhibiting new foliage growth, and 10.8% trees exhibiting unopened flower buds.	

## Perthville Black Gum Offset Site Photo Point Monitoring


Photo Point ID	Site	Bearing	Longitude	Latitude			
PP3	North Street, Perthville		149.5528485	-33.4859696			
End of Year 4		End of Year 5		End of Year 6		End of Year 7	
Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
28 August 2024							
Description	Description	Description	Description	Description	Description	Description	Description
48 months after planting Black Gums, grass short due to regular slashing.							
							
Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments
76.7% of 10m line transect comprising of prairie grass ( <i>Bromus sp.</i> ), 10% dead grass and dandelion ( <i>Taraxacum sp.</i> ) respectively, and 6.7% dock and <i>Phalaris sp.</i> respectively. 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect. 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect. Although 95.3% of Black Gums show evidence of insect damage, 87.2% of trees scored the highest health rating of 3.							

## Perthville Black Gum Offset Site Photo Point Monitoring





Photo Point ID	Site	Bearing	Longitude	Latitude
PP4	North Street, Perthville	312°	149.552871	-33.487148
Baseline (before works)	End of Year 1	End of Year 2	End of Year 3	
Date	Date	Date	Date	
7 February 2020	27 August 2021	10 August 2022	11 August 2023	
Description	Description	Description	Description	
Baseline photo prior to site preparation, weed control and planting of Black Gum	12 months after planting of Black Gums, 4 months after slashing of grass between plantings.	24 months after planting of Black Gums, grass short due to recent slashing	36 months after planting Black Gums, grass short due to regular slashing.	
				
Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	
Floodplain between North Street flood levee and Queen Charlotte Vale Creek with stockpiled soil and road base from flood levee mitigation works. Ground highly compacted due to heavy machinery used on site.	Floodplain between North Street flood levee and Queen Charlotte Vale Creek. Grass understorey short due to previous slashing of grass and dormancy of perennial grasses. 50% of 10m line transect comprised of Prairie Grass ( <i>Bromus sp.</i> ), 46.7% dead grass species, and 3.3% Dandelion ( <i>Taraxacum sp.</i> ). 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect.	Still evidence of soil compaction because of vehicle movement. 83% of 10m line transect comprised of Phalaris, 10% clover ( <i>Trifolium sp.</i> ) and 7% Dandelion ( <i>Taraxacum sp.</i> ) 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect. Significant growth on Black Gums with 0.7% trees exhibiting early stages of flower buds, and 44% having adult (mature) foliage.	Evidence of recent floods (Nov 22) with detritus. 53% of 10m line transect comprising of Clover, 43% Dandelion ( <i>Taraxacum sp.</i> ) and 3% unknown species. 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect. Although 16% of Black Gums are stunted in growth, 92% are exhibiting new foliage growth, and 10.8% trees exhibiting unopened flower buds.	




## Perthville Black Gum Offset Site Photo Point Monitoring

Photo Point ID	Site	Bearing	Longitude	Latitude
PP4	North Street, Perthville		149.552871	-33.487148
End of Year 4	End of Year 5	End of Year 6	End of Year 7	
Date	Date	Date	Date	
28 August 2024				
Description	Description	Description	Description	
48 months after planting Black Gums, grass short due to regular slashing.				
				
Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	
46.7% of 10m line transect comprising of prairie grass ( <i>Bromus sp.</i> ), 23.3% clover ( <i>Trifolium sp.</i> ), 20% dandelion ( <i>Taraxacum sp.</i> ), and 10% dock ( <i>Rumex sp.</i> ). 0% target weed species identified along the 10m line transect. Although 95.3% of Black Gums show evidence of insect damage, 87.2% of trees scored the highest health rating of 3.				

## Perthville Black Gum Offset Site Photo Point Monitoring

Photo Point ID	Site	Bearing	Longitude	Latitude
PP5	North Street, Perthville	106°	149.552911	-33.487168
Baseline (before works)	End of Year 1	End of Year 2	End of Year 3	
Date	Date	Date	Date	
7 February 2020	27 August 2021	10 August 2022	11 August 2023	
Description	Description	Description	Description	
Baseline photo prior to site preparation, weed control and planting of Black Gum	12 months after planting of Black Gums, 4 months after slashing of grass between plantings.	24 months after planting Black Gums, grass short due to recent slashing	36 months after planting Black Gums, grass short due to regular slashing.	
				
Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	
Recently installed bank of the Perthville flood levee looking east southeast and running parallel with North Street. Ground highly compacted due to heavy machinery used on site. New fencing installed along northern boundary.	Grass understorey short due to previous slashing of grass and dormancy of perennial grasses. 46.7% of 10m line transect comprised of Prairie Grass ( <i>Bromus sp.</i> ), 46.7% dead grass species, 3.3% Dock ( <i>Rumex sp.</i> ) and 3.3% Indian Mustard ( <i>Rapistrum rogosum</i> ). 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect. Presence of rabbits digging at the base of one (1) tree only.	Still evidence of soil compaction because of vehicle movement. 77% of 10m line transect comprised of Phalaris, 17% Dock ( <i>Rumex sp.</i> ) 7% Clover ( <i>Trifolium sp.</i> ) 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect. Significant growth on Black Gums with 0.7% trees exhibiting early stages of flower buds, and 44% having adult (mature) foliage.	Evidence of recent floods (Nov 22) with detritus. 73% of 10m line transect comprising of Prairie grass ( <i>Bromus sp.</i> ), 10% dead grass and 3% Dock ( <i>Rumex sp.</i> ). 0% target weed species were identified along the 10m line transect. Although 16% of Black Gums are stunted in growth, 92% are exhibiting new foliage growth, and 10.8% trees exhibiting unopened flower buds.	

## Perthville Black Gum Offset Site Photo Point Monitoring

Photo Point ID	Site	Bearing	Longitude	Latitude			
PP5	North Street, Perthville		149.552911	-33.487168			
End of Year 4		End of Year 5		End of Year 6		End of Year 7	
Date		Date		Date		Date	
28 August 2024							
Description		Description		Description		Description	
48 months after planting Black Gums, grass short due to regular slashing.							
							
Comments		Comments		Comments		Comments	
53.3% of 10m line transect comprising of clover ( <i>Trifolium sp.</i> ), 23% <i>Phalaris sp.</i> , 16.7% prairie grass ( <i>Bromus sp.</i> ), and 3% <i>Plantago sp.</i> and native couch grass respectively. 0% target weed species identified along the 10m line transect. Although 95.3% of Black Gums show evidence of insect damage, 87.2% of trees scored the highest health rating of 3.							