

# **Final Verification Report**

**Allegheny Land Trust, Buena Vista Heights, Elizabeth Twp, PA**

CFC Project Number 009

September 10, 2020

Ecofor LLC

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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City Forest Credits engaged Ecofor LLC (Ecofor) to verify the project named “Elizabeth Twp, PA – Buena Vista Heights Conservation Area”, for the reporting period June 30, 2020 through June 29, 2023. The goal of the verification is to ensure that the GHG assertion is materially correct, and that the assertions made by the project are well documented.

## 1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Project conserves forest on lands that are at risk of conversion to non-forest through clearing of trees to convert the land to developed use. The project is located within the Buena Vista Heights Conservation Area, which is within Elizabeth Township, within Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. Allegheny County includes the city of Pittsburgh. Allegheny Land Trust (ALT) acquired the project area from a developer-owner who had a Planned Residential Development (PRD) created for the site. The Project Operator is the ALT, and ALT has taken ownership of the lands as part of the project. The Project uses CFC’s 40-year Tree Preservation Protocol, v8.40 dated February 7, 2020.

The project start date, also known as the credit commencement date, is June 30, 2020. The project life is 40 years.

## 1.2 CONTACT INFORMATION

### Project Operator

Allegheny Land Trust  
416 Thorn St.  
Sewickley, PA 15143  
Contact: Alyson Fearon, Community Conservation Director

### Verification Body

Ecofor LLC  
16011 36<sup>th</sup> Ave NE  
Lake Forest Park, WA 98155

## 1.3 OBJECTIVE

The goal of this GHG emission reduction verification is to ensure that the GHG assertion made by the Project is materially correct, that the assertions and assumptions used in the offset calculations are appropriate, that the offset calculations conform to the CFC Protocol, and that the Project is in compliance with all CFC requirements relating to eligibility, accounting and documentation.

## 2 VERIFICATION CRITERIA

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### 2.1 PROTOCOL

The verification was conducted to the City Forest Credits Tree Preservation Protocol – 40 years, version 8.40, February 7, 2020.

### 2.2 LEVEL OF ASSURANCE

This verification was conducted to a reasonable level of assurance.

## 3 SCOPE OF VERIFICATION

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- The Project encompasses 123.91 acres within three property parcels within the US urbanized census area of Buena Vista, PA.
- On June 30, 2020, ALT acquired ownership of the land and at the same time, ALT established a restrictive covenant on the land that prevents cutting of trees except for controlling hazards, improving forest health, storm damage control, and invasive species control. The deed covenants are the “Preservation Commitment” in force on the Project Lands.
- The Project avoids emission of CO<sub>2</sub> from trees by avoiding conversion of forest to non-forest land cover and avoids emission of CO<sub>2</sub> from soil resulting from the conversion of forest to impervious surface. The project intends to quantify future sequestration resulting from growth of the existing forest through the coming decades.
- Reporting Period is June 30, 2020 through June 29, 2020.
- The verification includes review of documents, data, imagery and other evidence provided by the Project Operator; independent checking of selected data; independent analysis of aerial imagery to confirm vegetation typing (and reviewing historical imagery to estimate stand ages); and checking of calculations for accuracy and conformance with the Protocol.

## 4 VERIFICATION PROCESS

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### 4.1 VERIFICATION ACTIVITIES

The verification process consisted of the following activities:

- Ecofor independently verified that the project area is within the Pittsburgh urban area.
- Ecofor obtained recent aerial imagery of the project area and verified that the area is substantially tree covered. Ecofor mapped the sample points the project used to calculate canopy coverage onto recent aerial imagery. Ecofor selected a subsample of points and classified vegetation and tree or non-tree, and checked the Project's classification of these points. Because non-tree points were rarer, Ecofor sought points with non-tree cover and emphasized those in the subsample. All of the project's classifications are correct.
- CFC provided the project an Excel spreadsheet for calculating credits. Ecofor reviewed inputs in the spreadsheet and they all appear to be correct. All calculations in the spreadsheet are correct.
- Ecofor checked all requirements in the Protocol, and confirmed that documentation satisfies the requirements of the protocol, and that values extracted from the documents and conclusions drawn from the documents are accurate and appropriate.
- Ecofor submitted to CFC and the Project Operator requests for clarifications and corrections, as issues came to light, and reviewed revised and corrected documents and calculations.

### 4.2 CFC TREE PRESERVATION PROTOCOL REQUIREMENTS

#### 4.2.1 Eligibility

The project area is entirely within the Pittsburgh, PA US Census Bureau Urban Area. Ecofor reviewed the Project against all CFC Tree Preservation Protocol requirements and confirmed the following:

- The Project Area is zoned to allow residential housing development and more than 50% of the project perimeter is in developed use.
- The Project Area currently is currently 83% tree canopy cover, which is greater than minimum required 80% tree canopy cover.
- Trees within the Project Area were not protected from removal prior to the Project
- There is a clear title to carbon credits through ALT's recorded ownership of the land and the Project Operator has legal authority to create and dispose of greenhouse gas offsets generated on the project lands.
- The Project Operator has committed to meeting the permanence requirements of CFC.
- The project commencement date is after November 1, 2017.

#### 4.2.2 Additionality

Project lands met the requirements of the Protocol:

- Prior to the Project, lands were not protected from conversion by easement, zoning, or other legal mechanism
- Zoning allows removal of existing trees
- GIS quantification of the project area border length shows more than 50% of the perimeter is in developed uses.

#### 4.2.3 Permanence

The landowner has established and recorded a permanent covenant on the land protecting the Project Trees.

#### 4.2.4 Accounting

Historical aerial imagery indicates that the project area had 10-15% tree cover in 1956, with most of the rest in pasture or mowed field, and a small fraction in roads, paths and bare area that appears to be a farmyard. The project reports that farming was discontinued about 1975. By 1993 more than 80% of the area had canopies of small trees or shrubs that, if trees, were dense enough to eventually form nearly complete canopy cover. As of 2019, the Project Area had 83% canopy cover. Ecofor did not independently verify the species mix of trees but the species mix reported by the project is consistent with the aerial imagery and with natural regeneration in the region. In the future, the project intends to claim credits for ongoing forest growth.

#### 4.2.5 Leakage

The project follows the CFC protocol and accounts for displacement of development, both in loss of biomass and displacement of impervious surfaces to other locations.

## 5 VERIFICATION FINDINGS

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All issues raised by Ecofor were clarified or corrected by the Project Operator and CFC and all issues were closed.

Ecofor recommends that CFC continue to monitor tree cover across the project area.

## 6 VERIFICATION RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

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This verification of the Buena Vista Heights Project for the reporting period June 30, 2020 through June 29, 2020 was completed in a manner consistent with ISO 14064-3 and in conformance with relevant CFC standards and guidelines. The table below is a summary of the emission reduction or removals.

Tract	Vintage	GHG Reductions and Removals (mtCO <sub>2</sub> e)	Risk Buffer (mtCO <sub>2</sub> e)	Emission Reductions to be Issued to Project (mtCO <sub>2</sub> e)
Buena Vista Heights	2020	6,261	626	5,635
Buena Vista Heights	2021	6,261	626	5,635
Buena Vista Heights	2022	2,996	300	2,696
Buena Vista Heights	Cumulative	15,518	1,552	13,966

**Lead Verifier Signature**



**Gordon Smith**