



**191 Springberg Lane, Perry Bridge, Victoria**

Aurora Growling Grass Frog Offset  
Management Plan Year 3 audit  
(EPBC 2007/3524)

Final Report

Prepared for Development Victoria

17 December 2024

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## Document control

Version	Internal reviewer	Date issued
Draft version 01	Michael Goddard	21/10/2024
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## Acknowledgements

Biosis acknowledges the contribution of the following people and organisations in undertaking this study:

- Robert Cromb: landowner
- Jessamy Smooker: Development Victoria
- Karen Tymms: Trust for Nature

Biosis staff involved in this project were:

- Michael Goddard (field assistance & quality assurance)
- Tom Hewitt (reporting assistance)
- Sally Mitchell (mapping)

*Biosis acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work.*

*We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians and Elders past and present and honour their connection to Country and ongoing contribution to society.*

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## Summary

Biosis Pty Ltd (Biosis) was commissioned by Development Victoria to undertake an audit of the implementation of the Aurora Growling Grass Frog Offset Management Plan (OMP, Biosis 2020) at the end of the third year of site management (Year 3). The OMP was prepared by Biosis in 2020 to compensate for impacts on Growling Grass Frog *Litoria raniformis* (GGF) associated with the Aurora residential development at Epping North, Victoria (the project), as outlined in EPBC Act Referral 2007/3524. Development Victoria will be referred to interchangeably as the ‘approval holder’ or Development Victoria throughout this document.

The OMP states that implementation of the OMP will begin upon registration of the covenant. The commencement date of site management is therefore 23 February 2021, and site management is currently within Year 4. As the Year 1 audit was missed, this report provides a detailed assessment of the first three years of management (Year 3). The Year 3 audit at 191 Springberg Lane, Perry Bridge (the offset site) was undertaken on 22 and 23 May 2024 by Jane Kenny (Senior Botanist) and Michael Goddard (Senior Associate Botanist).

### Compliance with EPBC Act approval conditions

This report addresses compliance with conditions relating to the GGF offset (conditions 4 and 5) from the *Variation of Conditions Attached to Approval, Aurora Residential Subdivision, Epping North, Vic (EPBC 2007/3524)*, dated 17 March 2019. The below table summarises the status of compliance with these conditions of approval as at the date of this report.

Condition	Condition details	Compliance
4	<p>The person taking the action must secure an offsite offset for the protection of the Growling Grass Frog (<i>Litoria raniformis</i>) by 30 September 2019. The offset site must be approved by the Minister. The offset site at a minimum must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. be outside the Melbourne Urban Growth Zone;</li> <li>ii. be no less than 10 ha in size and contain opportunities for offsite dispersal;</li> <li>iii. be sourced in consultation with the Growling Grass Frog Recovery Team; and</li> <li>iv. represent habitat critical to the survival of the <i>L. raniformis</i> as per page 7 of the species’ National Recovery Plan.</li> </ul>	<b>Compliant</b>
5	<p>The person taking the action must submit an Offset Management Plan within 6 months of this variation for the Minister’s approval. At a minimum, the plan must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. baseline surveys;</li> <li>ii. provision to covenant the offset site for protection;</li> <li>iii. performance indicators, including threat abatement and adaptive measures to be implemented to adequately demonstrate a stable or improved population of <i>L. raniformis</i> on site;</li> <li>iv. public awareness and education program;</li> <li>v. monitoring and reporting.</li> </ul>	<b>Compliant</b>

## Year 3 status of OMP implementation

This report identifies whether the management actions for the offsite site are being achieved as at the end of Year 3 of site management. The below table summarises the status of the OMP implementation at Year 3.

Year	Objective – entire offset site	OMP reference	Status at Year 3
1 and ongoing	1. Control of stock, unauthorised activities and vehicle access.	OMP Table 5 and Section 3.9.1 & 3.10.1	Achieved – ongoing
1 and ongoing	2. Remove all woody weed infestations within the offset area.	OMP Table 5 and Section 3.9.2 & 3.10.2	Partially achieved – ongoing
Annual	3. Monitor and control herbaceous weeds.	OMP Table 5 and Section 3.9.3 & 3.10.2	Not yet achieved – ongoing
Ongoing	4. Monitor and control new and emerging woody weeds	OMP Table 5 and Section 3.9.2 & 3.10.2	Partially achieved – ongoing
Twice yearly	5. Monitor and evaluate GGF population and habitat condition.	OMP Table 5 and Section 3.9.5 & 3.10.5	Partially achieved – ongoing
Ongoing	6. Monitor and control rabbits, hares and foxes.	OMP Table 5 and Section 3.9.4 & 3.10.3	Achieved – ongoing
Ongoing	7. Monitor and control all new and emerging pest animals.	OMP Table 5 and Section 3.9.4 & 3.10.3	Achieved – ongoing
Annual	8. Monitor tree and shrub regeneration and undertake ecological thinning if required.	OMP Table 5 and Section 3.9.6 & 3.10.4	Achieved – ongoing
All (annually)	Prepare and submit an annual report.	OMP Table 5 and Section 3.11	Partially achieved – ongoing

## Recommendations

During the first three years of the GGF offset at Perry Bridge, the landowner has achieved a significant part of the overall objective of the OMP, which is to secure, maintain and improve GGF habitat within the designated offset site. While some of the management actions of the OMP (e.g. record keeping and monitoring requirements) have not yet been achieved, the landowner has nevertheless successfully secured the site and effectively maintained its GGF habitat at a high quality.

The following ongoing management and monitoring actions are required to comply with the GGF OMP and are the responsibility of the landowner:

### Fencing

- Survey fencing quarterly and when visiting the site to conduct other monitoring or management actions.
- Repair damaged fencing promptly, including two damaged sections of fence observed during audit.

### Weeds

- Undertake annual spring weed monitoring as per the OMP.

- Cease use of residual herbicides (Metsulfuron Methyl).
- Continue control of all high threat weeds including cut and paint and manual removal of mature woody weeds. Treat weeds prior to seed set.

### Pest animals

- Record signs of pest animals during annual weed monitoring and at all other times when visiting the offset site, mapping the location of active rabbit warrens and fox dens with GPS.
- Undertake regular monitoring for pest animals and inform Trust for Nature of new or emerging pest animals. Extend search over surrounding property within 500 metres of the offset site.
- Continue to control rabbits, hares and foxes throughout the year and if detected, fumigate, bait and hand collapse burrows and fox dens. Continue to control hog deer within permitted allowances.
- Recommendation to keep records of any predatory fish located during annual GGF monitoring, and to note in GGF monitoring report if found.

### Biomass and organic litter

- Monitor depth of each of the three freshwater ponds annually during annual GGF monitoring, and provide results in GGF monitoring report.
- Undertake sediment removal when any pond is less than 1 metre in depth, in no more than two of the three ponds during a 12-month period.

### Tree and shrub recruitment

- Monitor tree and shrub regeneration during the annual weed monitoring, and include results in the weed monitoring reports. Collect the following information:
  - Projective foliage cover (%) of shrubs greater than 1 metre tall around each of the three freshwater ponds.
  - Projective foliage cover (%) of trees and shrubs greater than 5 metres tall across the whole offset site, and individually within each of the three wetland units.
- Where the perimeter of any freshwater pond is found to support more than 50% projective foliage cover of shrubs taller than 1 metre, undertake ecological thinning to reduce cover to 20%. Thinning is likely to be required in Year 4.
- Where the projective foliage cover of trees and shrubs greater than 5 metres tall across the whole offset site or within any of the three wetland units exceeds 10%, undertake ecological thinning. This is not currently required.

### Site hydrology

- Continue to maintain the two causeways and the one-way culvert under the southern causeway in good condition.
- Continue to undertake annual salinity monitoring during annual GGF monitoring, ensuring each of the wetland units and freshwater ponds is monitored. Present results in GGF monitoring reports.

### Growling Grass Frog

- Continue to undertake annual GGF monitoring during the breeding season (November to December) with subsequent monitoring in January to February for tadpoles and metamorphs.

- Consider using Year 2 results as the baseline to assess changes or trends in the habitat condition or population size.
- Ensure GGF monitoring reports from Year 4 onwards provide detailed methodology, results and analysis for adult GGF surveys, tadpole surveys, salinity monitoring and water depth monitoring.

The following reporting, auditing and review outputs are required to remain compliant with the GGF OMP and conditions of the EPBC Act approval:

### Landowner reporting

- Submit annual reports to Trust for Nature and the approval holder for each year of the 10 years of the OMP. Annual reports must address progress against the commitments set out in the OMP and include:
  - Details of management actions undertaken within the reporting period, including details of compliance or non-compliance with the OMP management actions and performance targets, and details of any incidents or new and emerging management issues, with recommendations for corrective actions and plan reviews.
  - Results of monitoring activities, including fence condition, weeds, pest animals, tree and shrub covers.
  - Results of GGF monitoring, salinity monitoring and pond depth monitoring.
  - Photographs, including those from five defined photo points.
- Recommendation for landowner to maintain records of all management activities, inspection findings, notes and actions and maintain records for the duration of the project to assist with future audits.

### Approval holder reporting, auditing and review

- Undertake annual compliance reporting to satisfy Condition 10 of the EPBC Act approval. Submit to DCCEEW and publish on the approval holder's website. Provide evidence showing proof of the date of publication and any non-compliance with the EPBC Act approval conditions to DCCEEW within two days of discovery by the approval holder.
- Engage an independent ecologist to audit the implementation and effectiveness of the OMP at the following stages, and submit the audit to DCCEEW:
  - The end of the fourth year of site management (Year 4, 23 February 2025).
  - The end of the eighth year of site management (Year 8, 23 February 2029).
  - The end of the tenth year of site management (Year 10, 23 February 2031).
- Consider a review and revision of the OMP to address minor inconsistencies (e.g. clarify reporting responsibilities and correct dates that have now changed as a result of the initial delay in covenant execution). If a decision is made to revise the OMP:
  - Notify DCCEEW, Trust for Nature and the landowner of the intention to revise the OMP.
  - In accordance with Condition 8 of the approval, provide the revised OMP to DCCEEW, along with reasons for why the revised OMP is unlikely to have a new or increased impact.
  - Provide the revised OMP to the landowner and Trust for Nature.



# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Project background

Biosis Pty Ltd (Biosis) was commissioned by Development Victoria to undertake an audit of the implementation of the Aurora Growling Grass Frog Offset Management Plan (OMP, Biosis 2020) at the end of the third year of site management (Year 3). The OMP was prepared by Biosis in 2020 to compensate for impacts on Growling Grass Frog *Litoria raniformis* (GGF) associated with the Aurora residential development at Epping North, Victoria (the project), as outlined in EPBC Act Referral 2007/3524. Development Victoria will be referred to interchangeably as the 'approval holder' or Development Victoria throughout this document.

On 3 October 2016, the Australian Government Department of the Environment, now the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), determined that compensatory offsets were required for the project's significant impact on GGF, which is listed as vulnerable under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The most recent variation to the EPBC Act Approval 2007/3524 is dated 17 March 2019.

An OMP was prepared for the offset site, which specifies a range of management actions including weed management, management of tree and shrub recruitment and protection of GGF habitat values from degradation by stock and unauthorised access (Biosis 2020).

## 1.2 Offset site

The offset site is owned and managed by Robert Cromb is located at 191 Springberg Lane, Perry Bridge, approximately 16.5 kilometres east of Stratford and 205 kilometres east of Melbourne (Figure 1). It encompasses 13.25 hectares of private land on the western bank of the Perry River, about 2.1 kilometres north of its confluence with the Avon River and Lake Wellington.

The offset site supports approximately 6 hectares of permanent or semi-permanent waterbodies, parts of which support Aquatic Herbland vegetation. Tall Marsh and Estuarine Wetland, the two most dominant Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) within the offset site, fringe the edge of the permanent and semi-permanent waterbodies. The Tall Marsh and Estuarine Wetland grade into Swamp Scrub and Sandy Flood Scrub near one of the freshwater springs and at the Perry River. The agricultural land immediately surrounding the offset site supports predominantly introduced vegetation, with some scattered Gippsland Red-gum *Eucalyptus tereticornis* subsp. *mediana*. The following EVCs were mapped by Biosis in January 2018 within the offset site (Figure 2):

- Tall Marsh (EVC 821), dominated by Common Reed *Phragmites australis*.
- Estuarine Wetland (EVC 10), dominated by Sea Rush *Juncus kraussii* subsp. *australiensis* with emergent Swamp Paperbark *Melaleuca ericifolia* and some salt tolerant species such as Beaded Glasswort *Salicornia quinqueflora*, Australian Salt-grass *Distichlis distichophylla* and Shiny Swamp-mat *Goodenia radicans*.
- Aquatic Herbland (EVC 653), characterised by a range of wetland herbs and graminoids, such as Common Spike-sedge *Eleocharis acuta*, Creeping Monkey-flower *Thyridia repens*, Fennel Pondweed *Stuckenia pectinata*, Water Ribbons *Triglochin* spp., Broad-leaf Cumbungi *Typha orientalis* and Running Marsh-flower *Ornduffia reniformis*.
- Swamp Scrub (EVC 53), dominated by Swamp Paperbark above a variety of herbs and graminoids.

- Sandy Flood Scrub (EVC 141), dominated by Burgan *Kunzea ericoides*, Prickly Tea-tree *Leptospermum continentale* and Black Wattle *Acacia mearnsii*.

As expected, the extent, distribution and boundaries of the above EVCs varies according to prevailing hydrological conditions. For example, the wetlands were full during the audit in 2024 but only partially full during the site visit in 2018, meaning the proportion of Tall Marsh, Estuarine Wetland and Aquatic Herbland was slightly different during each visit.

The offset site is divided into three wetland units by two causeways which, to some extent, regulate the incursion of saline water into the offset site. The southern causeway separates the southern and central units while the northern causeway separates the central and northern units (Figure 2). The units vary in salinity, from brackish water (mainly in the south) to freshwater (mainly in the north). The presence of some saline conditions is suspected to have suppressed the spread of Chytrid Fungus *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*, at least to some extent (Heard et al. 2014), which is a known threat to GGF populations (Clemann and Gillespie 2012). Natural freshwater springs and constructed freshwater dams provide freshwater inputs to the wetland units, and permanent freshwater refugia for GGF.

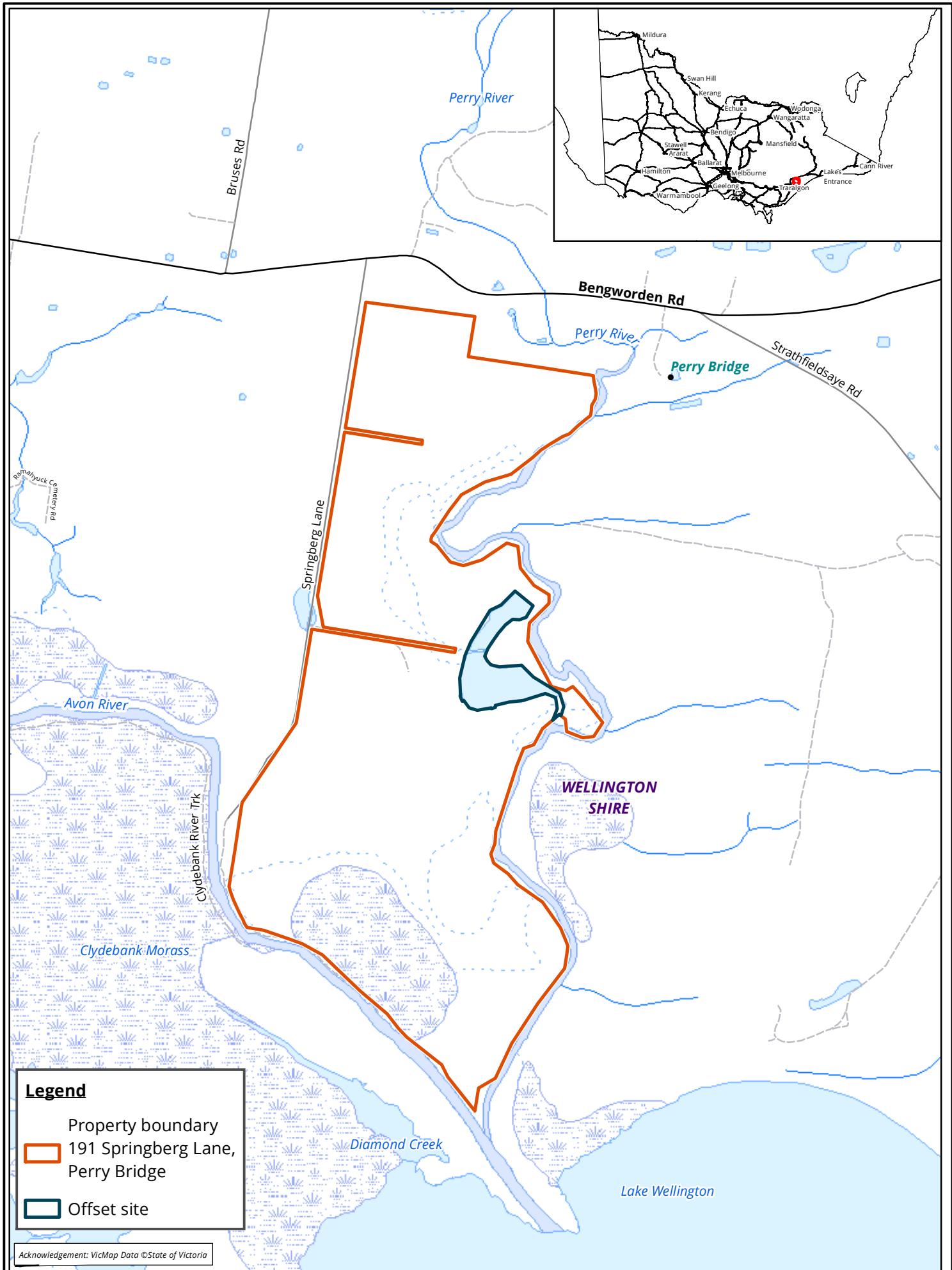
### 1.3 Objectives of audit

The OMP specifies that audits will be conducted by an independent ecologist at the following stages:

- At the end of the first year of site management (Year 1, 23 February 2022) – this is to ensure that initial management actions are conducted to the satisfaction of the approval holder and DCCEEW, including implementing the legal security mechanism, ensuring the property is securely fenced, and that other initial management actions have commenced.
- At the end of the fourth year of site management (Year 4, 23 February 2025) – this will involve a review of four annual monitoring and management reports, as well as an independent assessment of the condition of Growling Grass Frog habitat within the site.
- At the end of the eighth year of site management (Year 8, 23 February 2029) – as per the Year 4 audit.
- Following the completion of the 10-year management period (23 February 2031) – this is to be a final audit of the implementation and effectiveness of this OMP. Note that DCCEEW may also require the proponent to randomly conduct additional audits at any time up until the end of the approval period.

The OMP states that implementation of the plan will begin upon registration of the covenant. The commencement date of site management is therefore 23 February 2021, and site management is currently within Year 4. As the Year 1 audit was missed, this report provides a detailed assessment of the first three years of management (i.e. a Year 3 audit). The objectives of this audit are to:

- Conduct a site inspection of the offset site.
- Collate and review available documentation and collect evidence to assess compliance with the OMP's performance criteria.
- Prepare an audit report (this report) to assess implementation of the GGF OMP, and recommend improvements or changes that could be implemented by the approval holder and/or the offset provider to ensure ongoing compliance

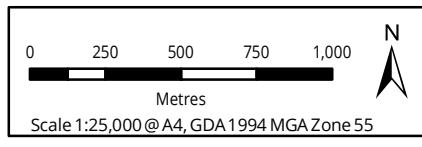


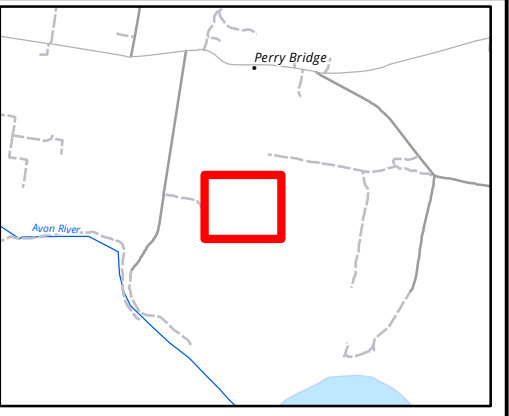
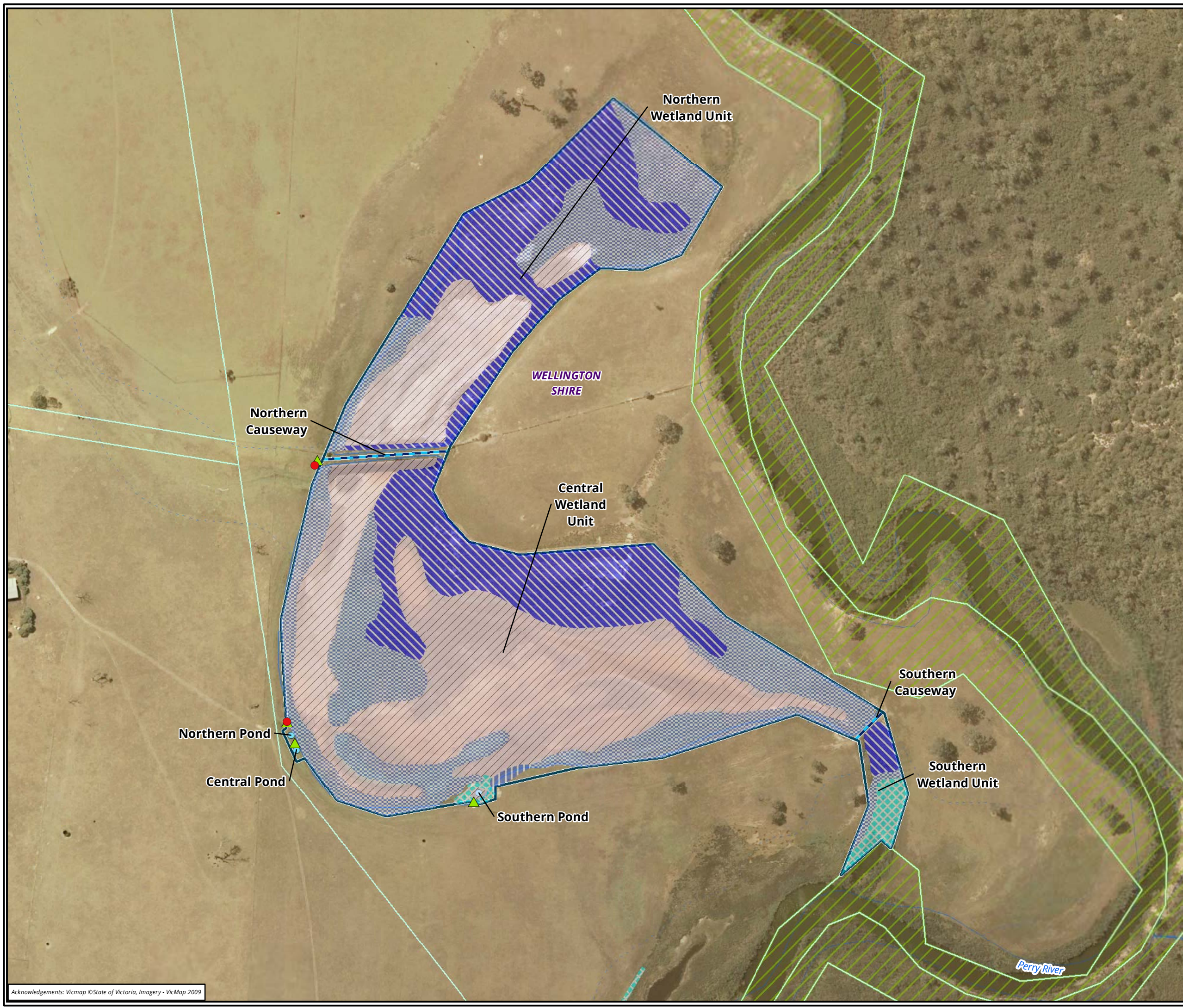
**Figure 1: Location of the Springberg Lane offset site, Perry Bridge, Victoria.**



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Date: 16 May 2018,  
Checked by: MG, Drawn by: SKM, Last edited by: smitchell  
Location: P:\26600s\26651\Mapping\26651\_F3\_Offset\_Locality





**Legend**

**Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC)**

- 10 Estuarine Wetland
- 141 Sandy Flood Scrub
- 53 Swamp Scrub
- 653 Aquatic Herbland
- 821 Tall Marsh

**Fauna records**

- Green and Golden Bell Frog
- Growling Grass Frog
- Offset site
- Ponds
- Causeways
- Parcel boundary
- Public land

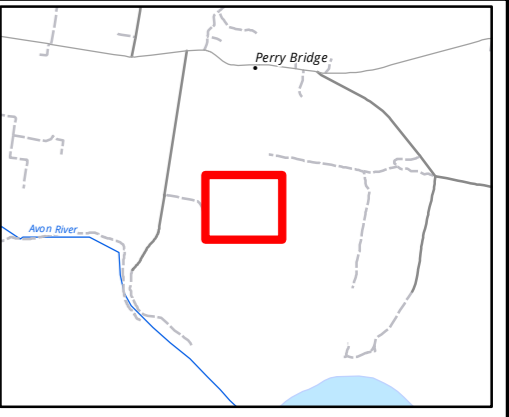
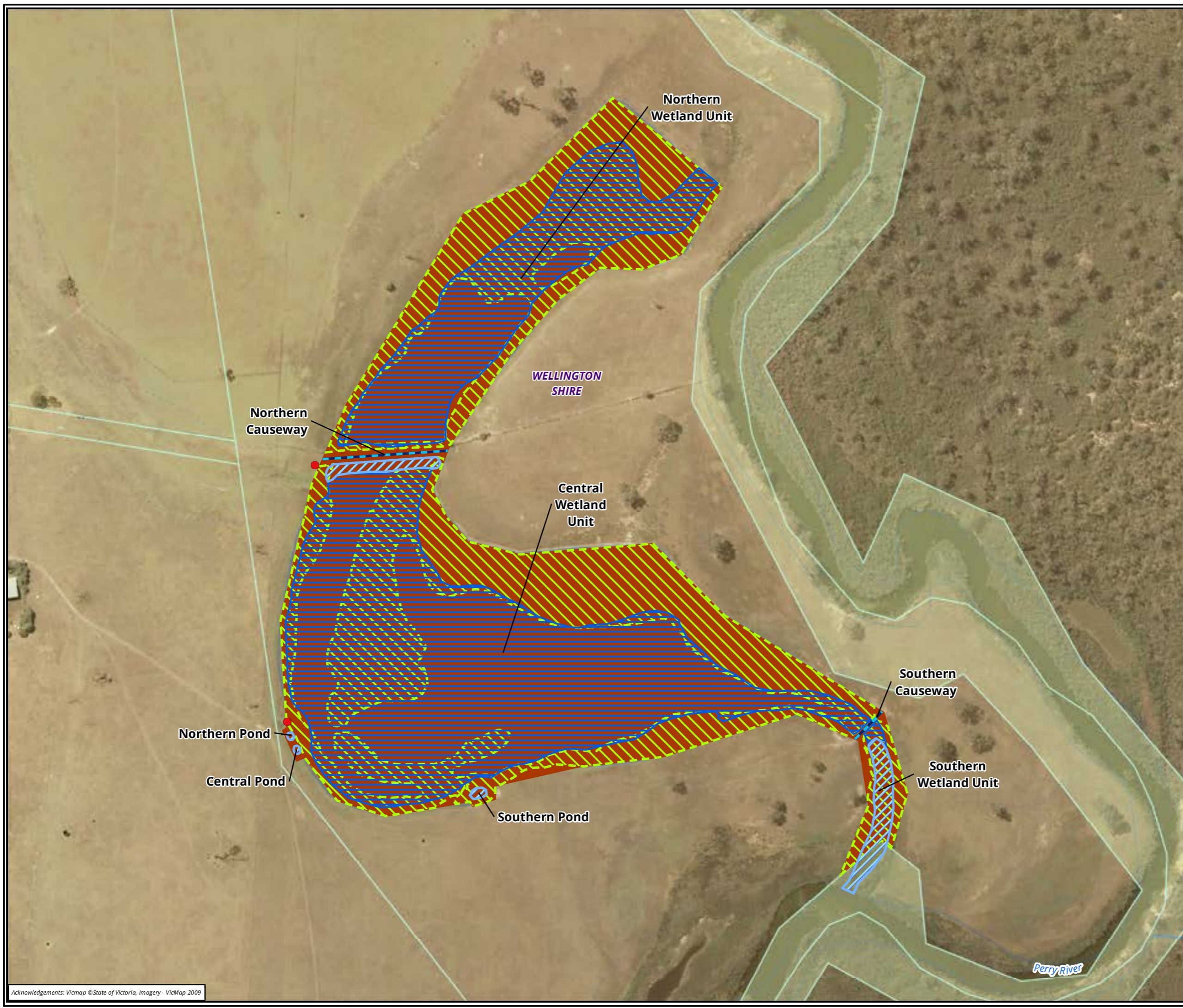
**Figure 2a Growling Grass Frog habitat at the offset site, Perry Bridge, Victoria.**

0 30 60 90 120 150  
 Metres  
 Scale: 1:3,000 @ A3  
 Coordinate System: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 55

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 Date: 28 August 2018,  
 Checked by: SGM, Drawn by: SKM, Last edited by: smitchell  
 Location: P:\26600s\26651\Mapping\26651\_F4a\_GGF\_Habitat.mxd

Acknowledgements: Vicmap ©State of Victoria, Imagery - VicMap 2009



**Legend**

- Parcel boundary
- Public land
- Causeways

**Fauna records**

- Growling Grass Frog

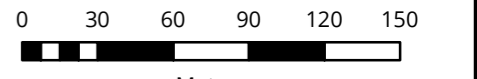
**Growling Grass Frog habitat**

- Sheltering habitat
- Foraging habitat

**Breeding habitat**

- Permanent waterbody
- Ephemeral waterbody

**Figure 2b Growling Grass Frog habitat at the offset site, Perry Bridge, Victoria.**



Scale: 1:3,000 @ A3  
 Coordinate System: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 55

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Acknowledgements: Vicmap © State of Victoria, Imagery - VicMap 2009

## 2 Audit methodology

### 2.1 Desktop assessment

The documentation provided to Biosis by Trust for Nature prior to the site visit is listed in Table 1. The provided documents were collated and reviewed prior to undertaking the site assessment.

**Table 1 List of documentation provided**

Type of documentation	Documentation provided
<b>Trust for Nature annual report forms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 1 (2021-2022) Trust for Nature annual report form completed by Robert Cromb, dated 22 July 2022.</li> <li>Year 2 (2022-2023) Trust for Nature annual report form completed by Robert Cromb, dated 7 January 2023.</li> </ul>
<b>Annual monitoring reports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 1 (2022) Growling Grass Frog Survey report for Robert Cromb (Gondwanan Ecosystems Management 2022).</li> <li>Year 2 (2022-2023) Growling Grass Frog Survey report for Robert Cromb (Gondwanan Ecosystems Management 2023).</li> <li>Year 3 (2023-2024) Growling Grass Frog Survey report for Robert Cromb (Gondwanan Ecosystems Management 2024).</li> </ul>
<b>Trust for Nature reports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 3 (2024) Trust for Nature Stewardship Report, for Year 3 site visit undertaken by Trust for Nature on 8 April 2024.</li> <li>Year 3 (2024) Trust for Nature Year 3 compliance letter, from Trust for Nature to Robert Cromb, dated 18 April 2024.</li> </ul>

### 2.2 Site assessment

A site visit at the Perry Bridge offset site for the Year 3 audit was undertaken on 22 and 23 May 2024 by Jane Kenny (Senior Botanist) and Michael Goddard (Senior Associate Botanist). The site visit comprised a walkover of the offset site, discussions with the landowner and recording of relevant data as observed (e.g. photos or locations of management issues).

### 2.3 Reporting

A Year 3 audit report was prepared after the site visit (this report) which addresses the following:

- Compliance with EPBC Act approval conditions related to the GGF offset (conditions 4 and 5) from the *Variation of Conditions Attached to Approval, Aurora Residential Subdivision, Epping North, Vic (EPBC 2007/3524)*, dated 17 March 2019.
- Status at Year 3 of the management objectives and standards to be achieved, as per the OMP schedule of management actions (Biosis 2020).
- Implementation of the GGF OMP.
- Conclusions and recommendations for ongoing management, monitoring, reporting and auditing.

### 3 Compliance with EPBC Act approval conditions

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This section (Table 2) provides an assessment of compliance with each of the EPBC Act approval conditions relating to the GGF offset and identifies whether the condition has been satisfactorily met, i.e. whether compliant (highlighted green), partially compliant (highlighted orange) or non-compliant (highlighted red). This report addresses compliance with conditions 4 and 5 from the *Variation of Conditions Attached to Approval, Aurora Residential Subdivision, Epping North, Vic (EPBC 2007/3524)*, dated 17 March 2019. Compliance against the remainder of the EPBC Act approval conditions related specifically to the Aurora residential development is outside the scope of this assessment and reported on separately.

**Table 2 Assessment of compliance with EPBC Act approval conditions (EPBC 2007/3524) relating to Growling Grass Frog**

Condition	Condition details	Audit response	Compliance
4	The person taking the action must secure an offsite offset for the protection of the Growling Grass Frog ( <i>Litoria raniformis</i> ) by 30 September 2019.	Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) executed between the approval holder and current landowner in May 2018. Offset site was secured with a Trust for Nature (TfN) deed of covenant on 23 February 2021.	<b>Compliant</b>
4	The offset site must be approved by the Minister.	Ministerial approval obtained.	<b>Compliant</b>
4 i	The offset site must be outside the Melbourne Urban Growth Zone.	Offset is in Gippsland, Victoria, and is outside the Melbourne Urban Growth Zone.	<b>Compliant</b>
4 ii	The offset site must be no less than 10 ha in size and contain opportunities for offsite dispersal.	Offset is 13.25 ha in size and is contiguous with the public land water frontage of the Perry River.	<b>Compliant</b>
4 iii	The offset site must be sourced in consultation with the Growling Grass Frog Recovery Team.	Offset site selection process involved liaison with the GGF recovery team.	<b>Compliant</b>
4 iv	The offset site must represent habitat critical to the survival of <i>L. raniformis</i> as per page 7 of the species National Recover Plan.	Offset site provides wetlands that conform to GGF habitat as per the National Recovery Plan (Clemann and Gillespie 2012 p.7).	<b>Compliant</b>
5	The person taking the action must submit an Offset Management Plan within 6 months of this variation for the Minister's approval.	The following OMP was prepared and submitted to the Minister within 6 months of the approval variation dated 17 March 2019: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biosis 2019 (Version FIN03 dated 11 January 2019) was approved 17 March 2019 by a delegate of the Minister, to be the current version of the OMP for the purpose of Conditions 4 and 5 of the approval.</li> </ul> During November 2019, a number of comments on the above OMP version were provided to Biosis by TfN which the Department required be incorporated into the final OMP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biosis 2020 (Version FIN04 dated 4 March 2020) was prepared to address TfN comments.</li> </ul> On 10 May 2024, Development Victoria was advised by DCCEEW that the revised OMP Version FIN04 (4 March 2020) had not been approved under section 143A of the EPBC Act, or provided to the Department in	<b>Compliant</b>



Condition	Condition details	Audit response	Compliance
		accordance with Condition 8 of the approval (DCCEEW 2024b). However, this non-compliance is related specifically to Condition 8.	
<b>5 i</b>	The plan must include baseline surveys.	A population of GGF has been recorded within the offset site. Section 3.10 of the OMP includes provision for baseline monitoring of this population in the first available breeding season after commencement of the OMP. The OMP places responsibility on the offset site landowner for monitoring (which includes baseline monitoring).	<b>Compliant</b>
<b>5 ii</b>	The plan must include provision to covenant the offset site for protection.	A TfN covenant provides legal protection for the offset site, as per Section 3.4 of the OMP. The offset site was secured with a deed of covenant on 23 February 2021.	<b>Compliant</b>
<b>5 iii</b>	The plan must include performance indicators, including threat abatement and adaptive measures to be implemented to adequately demonstrate a stable or improved population of <i>L. raniformis</i> on site.	An annual monitoring program is detailed in Section 3.10 of the OMP to evaluate GGF abundance, note breeding activity, and monitor water salinity to ensure a diversity of suitable habitats persist.	<b>Compliant</b>
<b>5 iv</b>	The plan must include a public awareness and education program.	Section 3.1.2 of the OMP provides a strategy for a public awareness and education program. An on-site awareness program for GGF will be established at Aurora in association with the constructed wetlands. This will include interpretive signage for the created habitat and its value to this species.	<b>Compliant</b>
<b>5 v</b>	The plan must include monitoring and reporting.	An annual monitoring and reporting program is included in Section 3.10 and 3.11 of the OMP.	<b>Compliant</b>

## 4 Year 3 status of OMP implementation

This section provides the schedule of management actions for the GGF offset site and identifies whether the desired outcomes are being achieved as at the end of Year 3 of site management. Table 3 identifies whether each action has been satisfactorily met as at the end of Year 3, i.e. whether achieved (highlighted green), partially achieved (highlighted orange) or not yet achieved (highlighted red). Most actions are ongoing and relevant for the duration of the 10-year management period. All actions are to be undertaken by the landowner or the landowner's representative. Photos from the Year 3 audit are provided in Appendix 1.

**Table 3 Assessment of progress against GGF OMP management actions – Table 5 of the OMP (Biosis 2020)**

Year	Objective – entire offset site	Timing of activity – month(s)	Standard to be achieved	Status at Year 3
1 and ongoing	<b>1. Control of stock, unauthorised activities and vehicle access.</b> Ensure the offset site is appropriately fenced from neighbouring land. Fences to be monitored and maintained in functional condition.	Within 1 month of commencement of agreement.	Exclude domestic stock access to offset area. Exclusion of unauthorised vehicles or access from offset area. Maintain fencing around the perimeter of the property to the standard detailed in BushBroker Information Sheet 12 – Standards for Management – Fencing (DSE 2012a) (sheep and cattle fencing standard). Any new fences, if required to control threats to ecological values, will be constructed to the standard required to exclude all domestic stock.	<b>Achieved – ongoing</b> Offset site is fenced from neighbouring properties and stock. While some fencing has top strand barbed wire and bottom wire electrified, the position of Trust for Nature is to allow this as it provides surety that stock do not enter the offset site during periods of inundation when electric power is not suitable. The audit identified two damaged sections of fencing that require repair, which has been raised with the landowner and is to be actioned. <u>Recommendation</u> Surveys of the boundary fence must be conducted quarterly and when visiting the site to conduct other monitoring or management actions. Damages must be promptly repaired.
1 and ongoing	<b>2. Remove all woody weed infestations within the offset area</b> Weeds to be managed in accordance with BushBroker Information Sheet 8 – Standards for Management – Weeds (DSE 2012b).	Within 1 month of commencement of agreement.	No mature woody weeds present within offset area (<< 1% cover) after the completion of Year 1. Minimise off-target damage (avoid all native plants and herbicide input into wetlands). Record and control any woody weed regeneration/re-colonisation.	<b>Partially achieved – ongoing</b> Common Blackberry <i>Rubus anglocandicans</i> was the only woody weed identified within the study area during initial surveys. During the Year 3 audit, Common Blackberry, Black Nightshade <i>Solanum nigrum</i> and one treated and partially dead African Boxthorn <i>Lycium ferocissimum</i> were observed on site. Common Blackberry was recorded at very low cover (<1% cover across the site) and is therefore considered eradicated for the purposes of the OMP, however, mature plants are present and should be a focus for weed control. African Box-thorn and Black Nightshade are new and emerging weeds not recorded during the initial survey. While the cover of woody weeds is likely <1% cover and treatment is evident, mature plants are present which appear to be regenerating. <u>Recommendation</u> Undertake annual weed monitoring in spring, as per the OMP. Continue ongoing monitoring and management to control woody weeds. Physical removal of mature woody weeds recommended so ongoing management can focus on woody weed re-colonisation.
Annual	<b>3. Monitor and control herbaceous weeds.</b> Control methods and timing specified in Table 4 and in accordance with DSE (2012b). Establish baseline monitoring sites including quadrats (10) and photo points (5) and reassess annually in late spring.	Annually in spring.	Herbaceous weed cover to not exceed current levels. Minimise off-target damage (avoid all native plants and input into wetlands). Target weeds with <1% cover at the end of 10 years.	<b>Not yet achieved – ongoing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No formal weed monitoring has occurred, or is known to have taken place since the start of the OMP, therefore it is not known whether weed cover has increased or decreased since baseline. It is highly likely that high threat weeds have set seed prior to treatment, due to the presence of inflorescences on species such as African Love-grass <i>Eragrostis curvula</i> and Cocksfoot <i>Dactylis glomerata</i>.</li> <li>The OMP specifies that high threat weed cover should be reduced to low levels (&lt;5%) by Year 10. There is no strict requirement for high threat weeds to be reduced below baseline levels (although this is implied). Based on visual estimates during the Year 3 audit, high threat weed cover is likely to be currently less than 5%, meaning that management is on track to achieve the 10-year target, however, weed monitoring is required.</li> <li>Herbicides used by the landowner within and surrounding the offset site are Roundup Biactive (active constituent 360 g/L Glyphosate) and Nufarm Associate (active constituent 600g/kg Metsulfuron Methyl). Review of Metsulfuron Methyl after the site visit has revealed this herbicide is a residual herbicide, which is prohibited by the OMP. The landowner has been informed and requested to cease using the herbicide.</li> <li>No quadrats have been established and one photo point has been established with three photos taken.</li> </ul> <u>Recommendation</u> Undertake annual weed monitoring in spring, as per the OMP, and confirm weed cover targets. Continue targeted management of high threat and herbaceous weeds.

Year	Objective – entire offset site	Timing of activity – month(s)	Standard to be achieved	Status at Year 3
Ongoing	<p><b>4. Monitor and control new and emerging woody weeds</b></p>	Ongoing	<p>New outbreaks of woody weeds to be removed as soon as detected.</p> <p>No woody weeds present within offset area.</p> <p>Minimise off-target damage (avoid all native plants and herbicide input into wetlands).</p>	<p><b>Partially achieved – ongoing</b></p> <p>Based on the text of the OMP, this objective should relate to all new and emerging weeds, not just woody weeds. Regular management of weeds occurring, however, mature woody weeds, while &lt;1% cover, are present within the offset area. African Box-thorn and Black Nightshade are considered new and emerging woody weeds that were not recorded during the initial survey, some of which did not appear to have been treated.</p> <p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake annual weed monitoring in spring, as per the OMP.</li> <li>• Update OMP to include new and emerging herbaceous weeds under this objective (as reflected in the text of the OMP) and properly define what new and emerging weeds are, given that no baseline weed monitoring was undertaken.</li> <li>• Physical removal of mature woody weeds recommended so ongoing management can focus on woody weed re-colonisation.</li> </ul>
Twice yearly	<p><b>5. Monitor and evaluate GGF population and habitat condition.</b></p> <p>Conduct baseline monitoring of population and breeding success. Reassess annually during the GGF breeding and dispersal seasons. Report on population and habitat condition, including water quality (salinity).</p>	GGF breeding season in beginning of Year 1 and again in January/February to identify metamorphs, then repeat annually	<p>Documentation of GGF population during the breeding season.</p> <p>Documentation of the success of breeding as metamorphs emerge.</p> <p>Assessment of any trends in GGF population size or extent.</p> <p>Documentation of the condition of GGF habitat condition based on visual assessments.</p> <p>Salinity levels of central wetland unit not exceeding 6.0 ms/cm.</p> <p>Salinity levels of northern wetland unit and freshwater ponds less than 3.0 ms/cm.</p> <p>Average depth of freshwater ponds no less than 80% of baseline depth.</p>	<p><b>Partially achieved – ongoing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual GGF monitoring underway, however, issues with first year of monitoring, and results not clearly presented for tadpole surveys, salinity levels and pond depth. Further detail required on assessment of changes or trends noted in the habitat condition or population size.</li> <li>• The delays in executing the covenant and commencing the OMP has led to problematic terminology in the OMP. The commencement of Year 1 in late February was the end of the GGF breeding season, and therefore an inappropriate time to monitor for adult GGF.</li> <li>• Monitoring for Year 2 and Year 3 was undertaken during the appropriate breeding seasons in 2022 and 2023, however, monitoring reports provide incomplete information with regards to tadpole surveys, salinity monitoring and water depth monitoring.</li> <li>• While the GGF monitoring reports provide some salinity data, they do not report on salinity for each wetland unit. Further information is required to determine whether the salinity levels of the wetland units are being appropriately managed.</li> <li>• No dredging or sediment removal has taken place since the commencement of the OMP. No monitoring of pond depth has occurred, however, the landowner advised that the northern and central ponds are not 2 metres deep and never were 2 metres deep, unlike the southern pond. The landowner is working with Geoff Heard to determine the best timing for dredging to avoid harm to frogs.</li> </ul> <p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review GGF monitoring program to ensure the methods are in line with the OMP and are appropriately documented alongside the results within the annual monitoring reports.</li> <li>• Provide further detail to assess changes or trends noted in the habitat condition or population size. As no baseline monitoring was undertaken, and the Year 1 monitoring was not undertaken during the breeding seasons, it is recommended that the Year 2 results are used as the baseline, and the OMP is revised to reflect this.</li> <li>• Undertake annual salinity monitoring within the wetland units and freshwater ponds during the GGF monitoring and provide results in GGF monitoring report.</li> <li>• Undertake annual pond depth monitoring within each of the three freshwater ponds during GGF monitoring and provide results in GGF monitoring report.</li> </ul>

Year	Objective – entire offset site	Timing of activity – month(s)	Standard to be achieved	Status at Year 3
Ongoing	<b>6. Monitor and control rabbits, hares and foxes.</b> Rabbits to be managed in accordance with BushBroker Information Sheet 7 (DSE 2012c).	Ongoing	No fresh ground disturbance by pest animals (particularly rabbits) observed in the offset area. No active rabbit warrens in or within 500 m of the offset area, minimal surface harbour for rabbits and hares present (but excluding natural harbour such as logs and rocks). No active fox dens within offset area, if present they are to be destroyed through fumigation and hand collapse. Continue to monitor and control rabbits and foxes all year round.	<b>Achieved – ongoing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No evidence of rabbits or hares observed during the Year 3 audit, and the landowner has not observed these species. Potential fox activity was observed during the audit, however, this is addressed through fox baiting.</li> <li>Impacts of hog deer were observed within 150 metres of the offset area. However, the landowner is limited by permit requirements to control the species.</li> <li>There is no direct or indirect (increased turbidity or trout finning) evidence that predatory fish are present within the ponds. Reports from the landowner in Year 1 and 2 indicate that no predatory fish were detected through dip netting, however, there is no evidence of formal annual monitoring.</li> </ul> <u>Recommendation</u> Annual pest animal monitoring should be formalised and documented in Year 4 onwards.
Ongoing	<b>7. Monitor and control all new and emerging pest animals.</b>	Ongoing	Control numbers of any new and emerging pests.	<b>Achieved – ongoing</b> No new and emerging pests noted. Continued control required, and commencement of formal monitoring and record keeping recommended. <u>Recommendations</u> Annual monitoring for new and emerging pest animals should be formalised and documented in Year 4 onwards. Keep records of any predatory fish located during annual GGF monitoring, and make note in GGF monitoring report if found.
Annual	<b>8. Monitor tree and shrub regeneration and undertake ecological thinning if required (section 3.9.6).</b>	Monitoring annually in spring and management in autumn	Ensure tree and shrub regeneration does not limit habitat for GGF. Maintain an open/scattered cover of immature canopy trees and understorey trees or large shrubs to a cover of not greater than 10%. If cover levels of the relevant species exceed these limits then they will be thinned to achieve the designated target.	<b>Achieved – ongoing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During the Year 3 audit, the projective foliage cover of medium shrubs was estimated to be approximately 50% around the northern and central ponds, and approaching 50% around the southern pond. No shrub removal has occurred as at the end of Year 3 as it has not yet been required.</li> <li>During the Year 3 audit, the projective foliage cover of trees and shrubs greater than 5 metres tall was estimated to be around 5% across the whole offset site, and within each wetland unit.</li> <li>The landowner advised that management has occurred to reduce the cover of Common Reed <i>Phragmites australis</i>, and that shrub thinning was planned to occur.</li> <li>While informal observations occur, no formal monitoring or record keeping of tree and shrub cover estimates are undertaken.</li> </ul> <u>Recommendation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include cover estimates for tree and shrub cover in annual monitoring and reporting in Year 4 onwards.</li> <li>Undertake thinning in autumn as per the OMP to avoid disruption of GGF prior to or during breeding season, in consultation with Geoff Heard, a species expert and member of the former GGF recovery team.</li> </ul>
All (annually)	<b>Prepare and submit an annual report.</b>	Submit no later than 2 months after the agreement anniversary date.	Annual report is signed, dated and submitted by the landholder at least 2 months prior to the anniversary date of the agreement.	<b>Partially achieved – ongoing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The timing column for this activity should state that reports are to be submitted no later than 2 months <b>before/prior to</b> the agreement anniversary date, which would be taken as 23 December each year. Reports have been submitted to Trust for Nature after this date due to the fact that GGF monitoring must occur from November to February.</li> <li>In addition, further detail is required in landowner reports on items such as; assessment of compliance with management actions and performance targets, incidents, new and emerging management issues, recommendations for corrective actions.</li> </ul> <u>Recommendation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revise the OMP to reflect realistic or meaningful reporting dates that align with the GGF monitoring period.</li> <li>Maintain records of all management activities, inspection findings, notes and actions and maintain records for the duration of the project. Include details of compliance or non-compliance with the OMP management actions and performance targets in the annual reporting, and details of any incidents or new and emerging management issues, with recommendations for corrective actions and plan review</li> </ul>

## 5 Conclusions and recommendations

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During the first three years of the GGF offset at Perry Bridge, the landowner has achieved a significant part of the overall objective of the OMP, which is to secure, maintain and improve GGF habitat within the designated offset site. While some of the management actions of the OMP (e.g. record keeping and monitoring requirements) have not yet been achieved, the landowner has nevertheless successfully secured the site and effectively maintained its GGF habitat at a high quality.

Discussions with Trust for Nature and the landowner regarding the results of this Year 3 audit have already commenced, and further guidance is being provided to the landowner to support them in achieving the GGF OMP management actions in future years.

The EPBC Act approval and associated conditions are in effect until July 2033 and the GGF OMP is in effect until 10 years of site management has been completed (23 February 2031). This section outlines ongoing actions required to remain compliant with the existing approval and ensure management, monitoring, reporting and auditing of the GGF offset site is being undertaken in accordance with the OMP.

### 5.1 Ongoing management and monitoring

The following ongoing management and monitoring actions are required to comply with requirements of the GGF OMP and are the responsibility of the landowner:

#### Fencing

- Survey fencing quarterly and when visiting the site to conduct other monitoring or management actions.
- Repair damaged fencing promptly, including two damaged sections of fence observed during Year 3 audit.

#### Weeds

- Undertake annual spring weed monitoring as per the OMP.
- Cease use of residual herbicides (Metsulfuron Methyl).
- Continue control of all high threat weeds including cut and paint and manual removal of mature woody weeds. Treat weeds prior to seed set.

#### Pest animals

- Record signs of pest animals during annual weed monitoring and at all other times when visiting the offset site, mapping the location of active rabbit warrens and fox dens with GPS.
- Undertake regular monitoring for pest animals and inform Trust for Nature of new or emerging pest animals. Extend search over surrounding property within 500 metres of the offset site.
- Continue to control rabbits, hares and foxes throughout the year and if detected, fumigate, bait and hand collapse burrows and fox dens. Continue to control hog deer within permitted allowances.
- Recommendation to keep records of any predatory fish located during annual GGF monitoring, and to note in GGF monitoring report if found.

### Biomass and organic litter

- Monitor depth of each of the three freshwater ponds annually during annual GGF monitoring, and provide results in GGF monitoring report.
- Undertake sediment removal when any pond is less than 1 metre in depth, in no more than two of the three ponds during a 12-month period.

### Tree and shrub recruitment

- Monitor tree and shrub regeneration during the annual weed monitoring, and include results in the weed monitoring reports. Collect the following information:
  - Projective foliage cover (%) of shrubs greater than 1 metre tall around each of the three freshwater ponds.
  - Projective foliage cover (%) of trees and shrubs greater than 5 metres tall across the whole offset site, and individually within each of the three wetland units.
- Where the perimeter of any freshwater pond is found to support more than 50% projective foliage cover of shrubs taller than 1 metre, undertake ecological thinning to reduce cover to 20%. Thinning is likely to be required in Year 4.
- Where the projective foliage cover of trees and shrubs greater than 5 metres tall across the whole offset site or within any of the three wetland units exceeds 10%, undertake ecological thinning. This is not currently required.

### Site hydrology

- Continue to maintain the two causeways and the one-way culvert under the southern causeway in good condition.
- Continue to undertake annual salinity monitoring during annual GGF monitoring, ensuring each of the wetland units and freshwater ponds is monitored. Present results in GGF monitoring reports.

### Growling Grass Frog

- Continue to undertake annual GGF monitoring during the breeding season (November to December) with subsequent monitoring in January to February for tadpoles and metamorphs.
- Consider using Year 2 results as the baseline to assess changes or trends in the habitat condition or population size.
- Ensure GGF monitoring reports from Year 4 onwards provide detailed methodology, results and analysis for adult GGF surveys, tadpole surveys, salinity monitoring and water depth monitoring.

## 5.2 Reporting, auditing and review

The following reporting, auditing and review outputs are required to remain compliant with conditions of the EPBC Act approval conditions and the GGF OMP:

### Landowner reporting

- Submit annual reports to Trust for Nature and the approval holder for each year of the 10 years of the OMP. Annual reports must address progress against the commitments set out in the OMP and include:

- Details of management actions undertaken within the reporting period, including details of compliance or non-compliance with the OMP management actions and performance targets, and details of any incidents or new and emerging management issues, with recommendations for corrective actions and plan reviews.
- Results of monitoring activities, including fence condition, weeds, pest animals, tree and shrub covers.
- Results of GGF monitoring, salinity monitoring and pond depth monitoring.
- Photographs, including those from five defined photo points.
- Recommendation for landowner to maintain records of all management activities, inspection findings, notes and actions and maintain records for the duration of the project to assist with future audits.

### Approval holder reporting, auditing and review

- Undertake annual compliance reporting to satisfy Condition 10 of the EPBC Act approval. Submit to DCCEEW and publish on the approval holder's website. Provide evidence showing proof of the date of publication and any non-compliance with the EPBC Act approval conditions to DCCEEW within two days of discovery by the approval holder.
- Engage an independent ecologist to audit the implementation and effectiveness of the OMP at the following stages, and submit the audit to DCCEEW:
  - The end of the fourth year of site management (Year 4, 23 February 2025).
  - The end of the eighth year of site management (Year 8, 23 February 2029).
  - The end of the tenth year of site management (Year 10, 23 February 2031).
- Consider a review and revision of the OMP to address minor inconsistencies (e.g. clarify reporting responsibilities and correct dates that have now changed as a result of the initial delay in covenant execution). If a decision is made to revise the OMP:
  - Notify DCCEEW, Trust for Nature and the landowner of the intention to revise the OMP.
  - In accordance with Condition 8 of the approval, provide the revised OMP to DCCEEW, along with reasons for why the revised OMP is unlikely to have a new or increased impact.
  - Provide the revised OMP to the landowner and Trust for Nature.

## References

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- Gondwanan Ecosystems Management 2024. Growling Grass Frog Survey. Report prepared for Robert Cromb. Author: Brightman, H. Gondwanan Ecosystems Management, Eagle Point, VIC.



# Appendices

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## Appendix 1 Photos

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**Photo 1** Central wetland unit, facing northeast from photopoint west of offset site, 22 May 2024



**Photo 2** Central wetland unit, facing east from photopoint west of offset site, 22 May 2024



**Photo 3** Central wetland unit, facing southeast from photopoint west of offset site, 22 May 2024



**Photo 4** Northern wetland unit, 23 May 2024



**Photo 5** Fence damage observed along southern boundary of offset site, 22 May 2024



**Photo 6** African Box-thorn and Common Blackberry along southern boundary of offset site, 22 May 2024



**Photo 7** Northern causeway, between northern and central wetland units, 23 May 2024



**Photo 8** Southern causeway, between central and southern wetland units, 23 May 2024



**Photo 9** One-way culvert under southern causeway, 22 May 2024



**Photo 10** Tree and shrub recruitment around northern and central ponds, 23 May 2024

