

[Offsetnetwork.org](https://offsetnetwork.org) is currently testing a “peer verification” step for impactful, community-focused projects that provide educational opportunities for students and aim to generate offsets for use in Second Nature and AASHE reporting.

Peer verification is an alternative approach to ISO-accredited 3rd party verification (accepted by nearly all major GHG programs). The process is low in cost and high in student and faculty educational value. However, as reviewers are not accredited verifiers, there is a need to shore up legitimacy of this approach by adding another layer of review to assess the verifications themselves.

Robust process review and transparency are fundamental to the credibility and success of the Offset Network Peer Verification process. It is also critical to the Offset Network’s goal to act as an incubator for novel project ideas, with successful projects connecting to existing offset markets for ease of replication.

Following the submission of verification reports, teams of expert peer verification assessors will review these reports and assess whether the verification process was carried out thoroughly and effectively. To assist this team of verification assessors, the Offset Network has developed a general guideline for review of offset project verification reports.

The guidance documents for expert peer verification assessors help the assessors determine:

- Did the verifier effectively assess PAVER standards? Are there any lingering questions?
- Are parties relevant to future project success identified within the verification report? To what extent are they engaged?
- Was verification conducted thoroughly and professionally?
- Does the verification determination reflect the findings and recommendations?

These guidance documents provide a means to help structure and standardize process assessment for peer verification and provide meaningful feedback for project managers as well as peer verifiers.

Assessment and feedback on the verification process will be included with the verification reports for each offset project posted on the Offset Network. This information should provide further support for groups and individuals preparing verification reports, and further establish the case study review approach to supporting the overall peer verification process.

The Offset Network’s goal is to develop a widely representative group of expert peer verification assessors to carry out these process reviews. This team will be made up of higher education faculty and staff, qualified graduate students, members of the professional offset community, and is open to any professional with established credentials. Interested parties and nominations for participation in this team of expert verification assessors may be directed to **PERSON OR E-MAIL ADDRESS** at the Offset Network.

Reviewer's Name: Ruby Woodside

Document Reviewed: Walltown and Guthrie Durham Pilot Validation Report

Section Review Summaries	Verification Approved	Verification Conditionally Approved	Verification Not Approved
Required			
Eligibility Conditions	x		
Permanent	x		
Additional	x		
Verifiable	x		
Enforceable	x		
Real	x		
Strongly Recommended			
Validation Summary	x		
Co-Benefits		x	
Interview Questions	x		
Site Visit	x		
Validation Statement		x	
Appendices	x		
Final Recommendation:	SELECT if 4+ "Verification Approved"	SELECT if 3+ "Verification Conditionally Approved"	SELECT if ANY "Verification Not Approved"

The verification seemed thorough and professional. However its not clear to me if this project was positively validated or not, based on discrepancies that the verifier noted with the monitoring plan and maintenance.

GUIDELINES FOR VALIDATION REVIEW OF CARBON OFFSET PEER VERIFICATION

You do not need to respond to everything. These questions are meant to help guide your thinking during the review.

Validation Summary

Questions to consider	Yes	No
Are parties relevant to future project success identified within verification report/onboard with the plans?	x	
Was the project management/maintenance plan assessed?	x	
Comments and Explanation (For any "No")		

Eligibility Conditions

Questions to consider	Yes	No
Did the plan conform with the relevant protocol/methodology requirements or were any deviations appropriately identified?	x	
Are project maintainers clear on the monitoring schedule and their project related responsibilities?		x
Comments and Explanation (For any "No")		
Verifier identified discrepancies between the monitoring plan according to the City of Durham and the DCOI protocol requirements.		

Permanent

Questions to consider	Yes	No
Did the verifier identify issues with a maintenance schedule or management regime that is essential to the project’s operation and/or success? Did the verifier effectively address these issues? Were appropriate suggestions made to resolve the issues?	x	
Did the verifier comprehensively identify issues that could impact the permanence of the ghg emissions reductions, removals or preventions resulting from the project?		x
Did the verifier identify any current or possible future sources of leakage in the project? Were these sources of leakage appropriately addressed through verifier review and feedback?		
(If applicable) were monitoring equipment calibration schedules identified?		

Did the verifier effectively assess planned or already made buffer pool contributions by the project?	x	
Were risk factors present in the project appropriately evaluated by the verifier? Do you think any risk factors warrant additional attention beyond the verifier's recommendations?		
Comments and Explanation (For any "No")		
Verifier is unclear who is in charge of tree maintenance.		

Additional

Questions to consider	Yes	No
Did the verifier thoroughly review and comment on project additionality, including a review of the project's history, project budget and funding sources, and projected offset sales arrangements?	x	
Did the verifier propose recommendations to address any issues identified with respect to additionality?		
Comments and Explanation (For any "No")		

Verifiable

Questions to consider	Yes	No
Did the verifier receive the appropriate monitoring reports from the project? Did the verifier appropriately address any issues with monitoring frequency being out of line with the project protocol requirements?	x	
Was the information from monitoring reports appropriately included in the verification reports?		
Were there any issues with sharing data or communication between project partners that should have been further addressed by the verifier? If so, are any communication or data sharing issues substantial enough to effect the legitimacy of the project?	x	
Did the verifier identify any missing project data, and if so, did they suggest an appropriate recourse?	x	x
If sampling was employed in the project did the verifier assess the level of sampling appropriately? Did the verifier assess the appropriateness of the selected rate and method of sampling for the project?		
Did the verifier propose recommendations to: address issues identified, and/or improve certainty around the project impact?		
Comments and Explanation (For any "No")		

Some data was missing from the initial inventory. Verifier noted what appeared to be miscommunication, as Alex Johnson, responsible for project monitoring, was unaware of the DCOI monitoring schedule.

Enforceable

Questions to consider	Yes	No
Was carbon offset credit ownership appropriately scrutinized by the verifier? Were contract documents reviewed? If additional clarity was sought, were project partners interviewed about credit ownership or was OffsetNetwork.org consulted?	x	
Have credits generated to date been registered on Offset Network or another registry? Was information on generated offset credits identified by the verifier – including their current status (banked/retired), vintage (year), unique ID#, and ownership?	x	
Was any evidence of double counting uncovered by the verifier?		x
Did the verifier propose recommendations to: address issues identified, and/or improve certainty around the project impact?		
Comments and Explanation (For any “No”)		

Real

Questions to consider	Yes	No
Was the verification conducted thoroughly and professionally?	x	
Did the verifier thoroughly review and assess project impact(s)? Did the verifier propose recommendations to address issues identified, and/or improve certainty around project impact(s)?	x	
Did the verifier thoroughly review and provide commentary on carbon calculations (equations and emissions factor(s) used, software used for calculations, etc.)?	x	
Did the verifier thoroughly review and provide commentary on transparency and public availability of carbon accounting data?	x	
In the event accounting or estimation errors were identified in the verification process, did the verifier propose recommendations to address the errors?		
Comments and Explanation (For any “No”)		
Verifier notes that transparent methodologies are not employed to calculate project impact.		

Co-Benefits

Questions to consider	Yes	No
Was the verification conducted thoroughly and professionally?	?	
Did the verifier propose recommendations to: address issues identified, and/or improve certainty around the project impact?		
Comments and Explanation (For any "No")		
Verifier should include an explanation of what the associated co-benefits are. This section is weak.		

Interview Questions

Questions to consider	Yes	No
Did the validator/verifier conduct interviews, phone calls or otherwise correspond with project stakeholders?	x	
Are communications with relevant stakeholders included within the report or in appendices?	x	
Did the validator/verifier request additional information from project stakeholders?	x	
Did they define how this information could be applied to improve the project or its documents?		
Are there any project stakeholders that seem relevant to communicate with but were not included within the report by the validator/verifier?		
Comments and Explanation (For any "No")		

Site Visit

Questions to consider	Yes	No
Did a site visit occur?	x	
Did site visit accomplish all project specific validation/verification site visit objectives?	x	
Was a site visit description included?	x	
Were any issues uncovered during the site visit?	x	
<i>If so, were these issues made clear through the validation/verification report and were recommendations proposed to have them resolved?</i>	x	
Comments and Explanation (For any "No")		

Validation Statement

Questions to consider	Yes	No
Was a definitive statement made qualifying the project as having passed, requiring certain changes to the project in order to pass, or failing the validation based upon identified issues?		x
Does verification determination reflect findings/recommendations?	x	
Comments and Explanation (For any "No")		
Not clear if this is a positive validation or not, but verifier does point out that the monitoring plan does not meet protocol requirements.		

Appendices

Questions to consider	Yes	No
Were monitoring reports (i.e. tree inventories, system calibrations, quarterly checks, etc.) included in materials for verifier review?		
<i>If they occurred</i> , were project reversals (i.e. missing/dead trees within an urban forestry project) explained within monitoring reports evaluated as part of the verification?		
Comments and Explanation (For any "No")		