Urban Forest Project Protocol Revision Process

Workgroup Kick-Off Meeting

May 29, 2013

9 AM – 4 PM PDT

SMUD Customer Service Center

Sacramento, CA

Workgroup Members Present:

Cindy Blain (Sacramento Tree Foundation), Francisco Escobedo (University of Florida), Denise Farrell (Environmental Capital LLC), Russell Hansen (City of San Jose, CA), Tom Hayes (Environmental Conservation Alliance), Robert Hrubes (SCS Global Services), Nancy Hughes (California Urban Forests Council), Greg McPherson (US Forest Service), Mark McPherson (Hillis Clark et al), Brett Milligan (UC Davis), John Nickerson (Climate Action Reserve), Michelle Passero (The Nature Conservancy), Walter Passmore (City of Palo Alto, CA), Emily Russell-Roy (Climate Action Reserve), Misha Sarkovich (Sacramento Municipal Utility District), Andy Trotter (West Coast Arborists), Doug Wickizer (Cal Dept. of Forestry & Fire Protection), Jeremy Williams (ArborVitae Environmental Services).

Observers Present:

Barbara Bamberger (Air Resources Board), Melanie Barnes (Texas Climate & Carbon Exchange), Neha Dhanik (Element Markets), Cynthia Guerra (Miami-Dade County Environmentally Endangered Lands Program), Morgan Hagerty (CE2 Capital), Allison King (SANDAG), Joe Liszewski (California ReLeaf), Joanna Malaczynski (ORCA Litigation & Advisory), Ralph Mize (City of San Jose, CA), Lucinda Roth (USDA), Adam Smith (Southern California Edison).

Other Participants Present:

Kyle Birchard (Individual), Jorge DeGuzman (SMAQMD), Matt Delaney (L&C Carbon), Janice Lam Snyder (SMAQMD).

Meeting Notes

1. Workgroup members introduced themselves and discussed their interest in participating in the urban forest protocol update process.
2. John Nickerson presented key principles of an offset protocol. This included explaining the rationale for a high level of rigor in developing a protocol update that will ensure credits

produced under the protocol are of high quality. This was addressed in terms of the development of key GHG accounting themes, including eligibility, baselines, leakage assessments, permanence, verification, and enforceability.

3. Greg McPherson led a brief discussion on the history of the Urban Forest Protocol.
4. John Nickerson and Greg McPherson led a discussion on how the current UF protocol addresses the key GHG accounting themes. Also discussed were the statistics associated with the use of the current protocol (essentially zero) and probable issues for its lack of use.
5. A general brainstorming session ensued to identify opportunities for improvement. This led to identifying key issues where attention is needed. The areas and issues identified by the workgroup members are listed below:

Eligibility

- Expand eligibility to mean the sum of trees within a municipality and not just the trees owned by the municipality.
- Rethink what constitutes "urban" for the purposes of an urban forest project. This is intended to encompass trees that may be excluded in the existing protocol.

Additionality

- Identify a process to determine the suite of regulations, ordinances, mitigation requirements, etc. that meet the consideration of legal obligations when considering urban forest carbon.
- Set a new performance standard for maintaining existing urban forest.
- Explore afforestation activities within an urban environment.
- Discuss start date requirement for urban forest projects (to be longer than 6 months?).
- Explore concept of financial additionality (i.e. demonstrating that new funds have been allocated for an urban forest carbon project).

Quantification

- Improve efficiencies by quantifying carbon through estimation processes rather than quantifying individual trees.
- Review the application of existing biomass equations for trees that are not open grown.
- Investigate the quantification of small forest tracts and backyard trees within an urban environment.
- Explore the importance/need to quantify carbon in harvested wood products.
- Develop improved methodological guidance for updating trees for reporting urban forest carbon inventories.

- Examine if emissions boundaries are adequately defined. For example is there a need to include emissions associated with water (pumping) usage for maintaining urban trees, as well as to include or exclude other non-biological emissions sources.

Verification

- Update verification guidance to include elements of sequential sampling.
- Seek other ways to standardize verification and increase efficiencies.

Reporting and Monitoring

- Explore whether/how to report and verify GHG cobenefits from energy conservation.
- Develop standardized reporting tools (spreadsheets).

Permanence

- Discuss inclusion of buffer pool and risk ratings for urban forest projects.
- Consider alternative ways to address 100-year permanence requirement (tonne-year accounting, rentals, etc.).
- Explore ways to manage urban forests to reduce risk of tree mortality (e.g., reduce potential buffer pool contribution?).
- Discuss issues of species diversity and use of native species—how should this be addressed in the context of an urban forest project (risk reduction, environmental co-benefits, etc.); what caveats should be included for climate change, aesthetics, practicality, etc.
- Consider varying spacing requirements depending on the size and species of trees.

6. Finally, the role of workgroup members was discussed. Workgroup members were encouraged to participate in a subcommittee. The actual identification of the subcommittees was delayed until a schematic, indicating the issues and focal areas was developed and distributed. John Nickerson will develop the schematic and distribute by mid-June at which point decisions will be made for sub-committee participation and scheduling.

The next workgroup meeting is a conference call scheduled for **Tuesday, July 16, 2013 from 10:00 am – 12:00 pm PT.**

The next in-person workgroup meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, October 3, 2013** at the SMUD offices in Sacramento, CA.