

Forest

Comparison of California ARB Compliance Offset Protocol to Climate Action Reserve Voluntary Offset Project Protocol Version 3.2



The protocol adopted by the California Air Resources Board (ARB) for the creation of compliance offsets from forest projects contains a number of changes from the Climate Action Reserve (Reserve) Forest Project Protocol V3.2. This document is meant to highlight some of the important changes that appear in the compliance protocol.

Eligibility

- ⌘ The Reserve accepts only new projects (start date no more than six months prior to submittal), while the ARB compliance program will accept projects with start dates as early as January 1, 2007.
- ⌘ Under the ARB compliance protocol, projects located in Alaska or Hawaii are not eligible, and those located on tribal lands must include a waiver of sovereign immunity for the project area.
- ⌘ Under the ARB compliance protocol, the crediting period is a renewable 25-year term from the project's commencement date, rather than the single 100-year crediting period under the Reserve protocol.

Project Ownership

- ⌘ Under the ARB compliance protocol, there may be multiple Forest Owners, one of which must act as the Offset Project Operator who submits the project to ARB and is responsible for its management. Under the Reserve protocol, there must be one single Forest Owner (which may nevertheless be comprised of multiple entities) who also acts as the Reserve account holder.
- ⌘ The ARB compliance protocol allows for an "Offset Project Operator," which is an entity who must be selected by the Forest Owner(s) to submit the project and take responsibility for project monitoring and verification.
- ⌘ The ARB compliance protocol categorically excludes projects on lands controlled by the federal government until such time as there is a federal legislative or regulatory process which approves such eligibility. The Reserve protocol contains this same general exclusion, but still allows for Avoided Conversion projects where the project area is transferred to federal ownership to support the project activity.
- ⌘ Forest owners are not required to sign the Project Implementation Agreement under the compliance program, as the state agency has authority to directly enforce against the Forest Owner(s).

Performance Standard

- ⌘ Under the ARB compliance protocol, when an avoided conversion project is to be implemented in lieu of mining activities, evidence must be provided for the commercial viability of the mineral extraction. Such evidence is not explicitly required by the Reserve protocol.

Baseline Determination

- ⌘ Under the Reserve protocol, improved forest management projects are required to adjust their baseline carbon stocks to account for project areas that have a high stocking level relative to other lands within the same logical management unit (LMU). The ARB compliance protocol does not include this requirement.

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Natural Forest Management

- ⌘ Under the ARB compliance protocol, projects must meet the native species criteria within 25 years, rather than 50 years.

Project Quantification

- ⌘ Sources, sinks, and reservoirs that are categorized as “optional” under the Reserve protocol have been changed to “excluded” in the ARB compliance protocol.
- ⌘ In the ARB compliance protocol, options for the use of alternative volumetric and allometric equations have been removed.
- ⌘ In the ARB compliance protocol, rotation age is defined by categories (short, medium, long, extremely long) rather than specific numbers of years.
- ⌘ Requirements related to compensation for reversals have been removed in the ARB compliance protocol and are instead covered in ARB regulations.

Project Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification

- ⌘ In the ARB compliance protocol, sequential sampling is required for verifying project inventories, whereas in the Reserve protocol this is provided as an option.
- ⌘ In the ARB compliance protocol, the verification team requires a Professional Forester, a forest biometrician, a forest growth and yield modeling expert, and an ARB-accredited Forest Offset Project Specialist, whereas the Reserve protocol does not make specific requirements for the professional qualifications of the verification team (beyond the general verification requirements).
- ⌘ Under the ARB compliance protocol, a georeferenced map (GIS shapefile) must be submitted with the project documentation. This is not required under the Reserve protocol.
- ⌘ Verification guidance from the Reserve protocol is not present in the ARB compliance protocol.