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# Verification Guidance

## Mexico Forest Protocol

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# 1 Introduction

This section provides guidance to Reserve-approved verification bodies for verifying GHG emission removals associated with a planned set of activities to increase forest carbon stocks.

This section supplements the Reserve's Verification Program Manual, which provides verification bodies with the general requirements for a standardized approach for independent and rigorous verification of GHG emission removals. The Verification Program Manual outlines the verification process, requirements for conducting verification, conflict of interest and confidentiality provisions, core verification activities, content of the verification report, and dispute resolution processes. In addition, the Verification Program Manual explains the basic verification principles of ISO 14064-3:2006 which must be adhered to by the verification body.

Mexico Forest Project verification bodies must read and be familiar with the following International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and Reserve documents and reporting tools:

1. Mexico Forest Protocol
2. Reserve Program Manual
3. Reserve Verification Program Manual
4. Reserve software
5. ISO 14064-3:2006 Principles and Requirements for Verifying GHG Inventories and Projects

Only Reserve-approved Mexico Forest Project verification bodies are eligible to verify Mexico Forest Project reports. To become a recognized Mexico Forest Project verifier, verification bodies must become accredited under ISO 14065 and be accredited under the Mexican Accreditation Body (EMA – Entidad Mexicana de Acreditación) and/or American National Standards Institute (ANSI). Information on the accreditation process can be found on the Reserve website.

## **2 Standard of Verification**

The Reserve's standard of verification for Forest Projects is the Mexico Forest Protocol (MFP), the Reserve Program Manual, and the Reserve Verification Program Manual. To verify a landowner's initial Mexico Forest Project Report (PR) and annual monitoring reports, verification bodies apply the verification guidance in the Reserve's Verification Program Manual, the MFP, and this document.

This document provides requirements and guidance for the verification of projects associated with an increase in carbon stocks from Improved Forest Management (IFM) and reforestation projects in Mexico and describes the core verification activities and criteria that are necessary for a verification body to provide a reasonable level of assurance that the GHG removals quantified and reported by Forest Owners are materially correct.

Verification bodies will use the criteria in this section to determine if there exists reasonable assurance that the data submitted on behalf of the Forest Owner to the Reserve addresses each requirement in the MFP. Project reporting is deemed accurate and correct if the project is in compliance with the protocol.

Further information about the Reserve's principles of verification, levels of assurance, and materiality thresholds can be found in the Reserve's Verification Program Manual on the Reserve's website.

### 3 Project Verification Activities

Required verification activities for Forest Projects will depend on whether the verification body is conducting an initial verification for registration on the Reserve, a minimum required verification involving a site visit, or an optional annual verification involving a desk review.

The initial verification is required within 12 months of the end of the Reporting Period for which the Project Report was submitted, either the first Reporting Period or the second Reporting Period, and must include a site visit. The initial verification will ensure that the project meets the MFP eligibility criteria and that the inventory, baseline development, and Project Area and Activity Area definition are consistent with the protocol requirements. The initial verification will additionally ensure that the project is in compliance with all social and environmental safeguards. The verification body must assess and ensure the completeness and accuracy of all required reporting elements for the Project Report (Section 10.1.2), presented in Table 10.1 of the MFP. At a Forest Project's initial verification, these items must be verified in addition to all the items required for a standard site visit verification.

Site verification is required, for projects not in an aggregate, every six Reporting Periods, or in the event of adding a new Activity Area. For example, if a project undergoes a site verification after the first Reporting Period, the project would not be required to undergo another site verification until after the end of the seventh Reporting Period (the site verification would need to be completed within 12 months of the end of the seventh Reporting Period), unless the project added a new Activity Area prior to the seventh Reporting Period. Site verification involves review of the Forest Project's carbon stock inventory estimates, relevant attestations, risk of reversal ratings, and compliance with environmental Safeguards. After a Forest Project's initial verification, subsequent site visits must assess and ensure accuracy in measurement and monitoring techniques and onsite record keeping practices.

For Reporting Periods in between required site visits, project verification activities may consist of a desk review. During a desk review, the verification body will review the data in annual monitoring reports to check calculations and information for reasonability, accuracy, and completeness. In order for reported data through a desktop review to be considered acceptable, the forest carbon change must be within acceptable tolerance bounds as described in Section 3.6 below. Projects that are not within tolerance bounds will be ineligible for crediting until any and all outstanding issues are resolved. Alternatively, the Forest Owner can request a site verification to justify the reported information.

Projects participating in an aggregate have a less frequent verification schedule. For guidance on verification of projects in an aggregate, see the Reserve Guidelines for Aggregating Forest Projects Version 1.1.

It is the Forest Owner's responsibility to ensure that verifications are conducted according to the minimum required schedule specified in Section 10 and 11 of the MFP. A Verification Report, List of Findings, and Verification Statement must be submitted within 12 months of the end of any Reporting Period being verified.

During verifications with site visits the Forest Owner, including members of a participating community or *ejido*, may support the verification process by assisting in the monitoring activities to the extent that the verifier feels confident in the results of the verification process.

The following sections contain guidance for all of these verification activities.

### 3.1 Emission Sources, Sinks, and Reservoirs

For all verification activities, verification bodies review a project's reported sources, sinks, and reservoirs to ensure that all are identified properly and to confirm their completeness. Table 5.1 in Section 5 provides comprehensive lists of all GHG sources, sinks, and reservoirs that must be included in the quantification and reporting of GHG removals.

### 3.2 Eligibility Criteria and Participation Requirements

Verification bodies are required to affirm the project's eligibility according to the rules in Section 3 of the MFP.

Section of MFP	Verification Items	Required at	Material to Review	Level of Professional Judgment and Verification Review Guidelines
3.1	1. Project Location	Initial Verification	Map that shows that the project is located in Mexico	None  Verification is complete if legible maps of the Project Area and Activity Areas have been uploaded to the Reserve's site and are publicly available.
3.3	2. Forest Owner Type	Initial Verification	Land tenure documentation as defined in Section 3.7	None  Verification is complete if the verifiers reviews the land tenure status per requirements in Section 3.7 of the protocol and confirms the Forest Owner is an individual or a collective legal person and that it is not a Federal public agency.
3.6	3. Aggregation	All Verifications	Aggregation documentation (if any)	None  Verifiers must identify if a project is part of an aggregation and if so refer to a separate verification guidance specifically for aggregated projects.
3.15.1	4. Attestation of Title	All Verifications	Proof that a signed Attestation of Title is on file at the Reserve for the dates of the verification period.	None  Verification is complete if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a current Attestation of Title is filed with the Reserve. Reserve personnel will provide confirmation.</li> </ul>
3.7	5. Land Tenure Documentation	Initial Verification	The verification body must conduct a review to confirm ownership and claims to GHG removals that have occurred over the verification period.	None  Verification is complete if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Verifier receives proof of ownership per requirements in 3.7 of the protocol.</li> </ul>

Section of MFP	Verification Items	Required at	Material to Review	Level of Professional Judgment and Verification Review Guidelines
3.8	6. Conflicts	All Verifications	Document emitted by the Agrarian Attorney ( <i>Procuraduria Agraria</i> ) that states that there are no agrarian conflicts within the Activity Areas.	None  Verification is complete if: verifier confirms that the document emitted by the Agrarian Attorney has been uploaded to the Reserve site and that Activity Areas are free of substantial conflicts or disputes with regards to ownership.
3.12	7. Project Start Date	Initial Verification	Documented action or event (such as meeting or General Assembly notes) when project activities commenced.	Low to Moderate  Verification is complete when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Verifier is able to confirm the Project Start Date as defined in Section 3.12 of the MFP.</li> </ul>
3.9	8. Regulatory Compliance	All Verifications	Proof that a signed Attestation of Regulatory Compliance form is on file with the Reserve for the Reporting Period.	Very Low  Verification is complete if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a current Attestation of Regulatory Compliance form is on file with the Reserve.</li> <li>▪ Verifier has confirmed through communications with state CONAFOR personnel that the claim on the attestation is correct.</li> <li>▪ Verifier shall consult with Reserve personnel to determine the period of time the project was not in regulatory compliance and the effect the violation will have on project crediting.</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Project Area Definition

Verification bodies are required to review the geographic boundaries defining the Project Area and Activity Areas and their compliance with the requirements outlined in Section 2.2 and 2.3 of the MFP.

Section of MFP	Verification Items	Required at	Material to Review	Level of Professional Judgment and Verification Review Guidelines
2.2	a. The Project Area has been presented as the entire ownership.	1. Initial Verification	Maps, displaying Project Area that includes towns, roads, and major watercourses.	Low  Verification is complete if maps, displaying towns, roads, and major watercourses, have been prepared, are legible, and appear to be an accurate depiction of the Project Area.
	b. Activity Areas are clearly defined.	1. Initial Verification 2. Site verification when new Activity Areas are added	Maps display Activity Areas. Inventory sample points should be distributed within Activity Areas.	Low  Verification is complete if the Activity Areas within the Project Area have been completed and appear to accurately depict the Activity Areas in the Project Area.
	c. Proof that a description, shapefile, and maps of the geographic boundaries defining the Project Area and Activity Areas are on file at the Reserve.	1. Initial Verification 2. Site verification when new Activity Areas are added	KML files have been uploaded to the project files and are publicly available.	None  Verification is complete if legible maps of the Project Area and Activity Areas have been uploaded to the Reserve's site and are publicly available.
2.3	2. Project Activities	1. Initial Verification	The PR describes general activities that will lead to increased carbon stocks over time and not avoided emissions.	Very Low  Verification is complete if the PR describes activities that the project will implement that will increase carbon stocks over time.

### 3.4 Additionality

Verification bodies are required to confirm that the Project is additional through the legal requirement test and the performance test.

Section of MFP	Verification Items	Required at	Material to Review	Level of Professional Judgment and Verification Review Guidelines
4.1, 7	1. Legal requirement test	1. All Verifications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Any laws, statutes, rules, regulations, or ordinances from the federal to local level that may indicate whether project activities, including carbon stocking, are legally required at the time of the project start date.</li> <li>2. Any other binding requirements that may affect carbon stocks, e.g., trusts.</li> <li>3. Signed Attestation of Voluntary Implementation</li> </ol>	<p>Very Low</p> <p>Verification is complete if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ all laws, statutes, rules, regulations, and legal requirements affecting carbon stocking within the Activity Areas are documented and justification is provided indicating the impact of the legal requirements on carbon sequestration.</li> <li>▪ Activity Areas do not include any areas affected by legal requirements that prohibit all harvesting.</li> <li>▪ a current Attestation of Voluntary Implementation form is on file with the Reserve. Credits cannot be issued for sequestration that is required by law.</li> </ul>
4.2, 7	2. Performance test	1. Initial Verification	The Forest Owner's baseline analysis, which demonstrates that risks to forest inventories are present at considerable levels within the Project Area.	<p>Very Low</p> <p>Verification is complete if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ review and investigation of the analysis demonstrates that the Project Area meets the threshold for risk defined in the protocol.</li> </ul>

### 3.5 Calculating the Project Baseline

Verification bodies are required to confirm that the Forest Owner has developed a baseline characterization for onsite carbon stocks according to the requirements in the MFP.

Section of MFP	Verification Items	Required at	Material to Review	Level of Professional Judgment and Verification Review Guidelines
7.1, Quantification Guidance	1. Baseline Carbon Stocks	1. Initial Verification	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 10% of randomly placed points on remotely sensed data (see below for further guidance).</li> <li>Determination of reference area surrounding randomly selected points.</li> <li>Selection of vegetation/land use.</li> </ol>	<p>Moderate</p> <p>Verification is complete if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ review of the analysis used to estimate land cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ demonstrates the analysis was conducted with a random sampling process;</li> <li>○ the attribution of sampled points and reference areas is at least 95% consistent with verification judgment; and,</li> <li>○ the calculation of the percentage converted from original land cover is correct and it meets the specified threshold for eligibility.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

The verifier will need to assess at least 10% of the random points and the respective reference areas the Forest Owner used to determine landcover throughout the Project Area and the percent of natural landcover used to meet the risk threshold for eligibility (see Quantification Guidance Section 2). The verifier should assess, based on an “agree” or “disagree” basis whether or not the landcover determined by the Forest Owner for each point and reference area is correct, and if at least 95% of the randomly selected points are agreed upon, may consider the landcover determination to be acceptable. If greater than 5% of the points are not agreed upon, the verifier will need to assess an additional 10% of the random points and reference areas until no more than 5% of the points are not agreed upon, or all points are exhausted and the verifier cannot approve the landcover determination.

Section of MFP	Verification Items	Required at	Material to Review	Level of Professional Judgment and Verification Review Guidelines
7.1, Quantification Guidance	2. Baseline Carbon Stocks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial Verification</li> <li>Site verification when new Activity Areas are added</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Calculation of Project Area Baseline based on defined threshold.</li> <li>Consideration of all applicable legal constraints.</li> <li>CALCBOSK</li> </ol>	<p>Moderate</p> <p>Verification is complete if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a review of the analysis shows they properly employed calculations from CALCBOSK and the inventory estimate calculated on the verifier’s CALCBOSK is equal to the inventory estimate provided by the Forest Owner.</li> <li>▪ the PR correctly addresses</li> </ul>

Section of MFP	Verification Items	Required at	Material to Review	Level of Professional Judgment and Verification Review Guidelines
				areas within the Project Area where legal obligations specify that no harvesting is permitted. If verifier desires further support they may consult with state SEMARNAT or CONAFOR representatives. Where uncertainty persists, the Reserve shall be consulted for a final decision.

### 3.6 Quantifying the Project Inventory and GHG Removals

Quantification bodies are required to review the Forest Project's carbon stock estimates, primary and secondary effects, and risk of reversal ratings as described in the MFP.

Section of MFP	Verification Items	Required at	Material to Review	Level of Professional Judgment and Verification Review Guidelines
6, 11, Quantification Guidance	1. Estimates of Actual Onsite Carbon Stocks	1. All Site Verifications	The inventory of the Project Area's carbon stocks in required and optional pools.	<p>Low</p> <p>All projects must utilize the inventory methodology in the Quantification Guidance. The verifier must copy the inventory data into a verification database (CALCBOSK; from Reserve's website) prior to the tests described in this section.</p> <p>Verification is complete if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the review of the plot layout and plot selection (for sampling) was conducted per the Quantification Guidance.</li> <li>▪ plot protocols (stated in the Quantification Guidance) were adhered to in field.</li> <li>▪ the error checks on the CALCBOSK application reveal no unexplained issues.</li> <li>▪ the inventory estimate calculated on CALCBOSK is equal to the inventory estimate provided by the Forest Owner.</li> <li>▪ sequential sampling is conducted with satisfactory findings as described in Section 4.</li> </ul>

Section of MFP	Verification Items	Required at	Materials to Review	Level of Professional Judgment and Verification Review Guidelines
		2. Desk Verification	Evidence that reported onsite carbon stocks are within expected bounds given reported harvest, growth, and disturbance effects since the prior Reporting Period.	<p>Moderate</p> <p>Verification is complete when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the estimates of forest carbon change, or the actual onsite carbon stocks relative to the previous year's onsite carbon stocks, are within acceptable tolerance bounds that reflects growth, harvest and natural disturbances from the previous year.</li> </ul> <p>Forest carbon change is calculated in Equation 11.1. of the MFP; for reported data to be considered acceptable, the forest carbon change must be positive and be within an 8% increase from the previous year in terms of CO<sub>2e</sub></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Verifier is satisfied with evidence that the reported harvested volume is accurate.</li> <li>▪ Verifier is satisfied with evidence that the volume of carbon stocks lost through natural disturbance, if any, is reasonably accurate.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A high level of proof exists if the plots existing in the disturbed area have been completely re-measured prior to the end of the Reporting Period.</li> <li>○ A low level of proof exists if other approaches are used that may estimate the area affected multiplied by the average carbon stocks within the Activity Area. Such approaches would require more verification scrutiny.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Section of MFP	Verification Items	Required at	Materials to Review	Level of Professional Judgment and Verification Review Guidelines
6	2. Quantification of Primary Effect	All Verifications	The project's Primary Effect calculations must be checked for completeness and accuracy.	<p>Very Low</p> <p>Verification is complete if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Verifier confirms Forest Owner used the Reserve's Carbon Monitoring Worksheet (CMW).</li> <li>▪ inputted data are current and consistent with the inventory data calculated in CALCBOSK.</li> <li>▪ Verifier is satisfied with the mathematical calculations.</li> </ul> <p>This may require the verifier to download the calculation worksheet from the Reserve's website and input project data to ensure the calculation worksheet has not been tampered with.</p>
8	3. Quantification of Secondary Effects	All Verifications	The project's Secondary Effects calculations must be checked for completeness and accuracy.	<p>Very Low</p> <p>Verification is complete if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Verifier confirms Forest Owner used the Reserve's CMW.</li> <li>▪ the inputted data are current and consistent with the inventory data calculated in CALCBOSK.</li> <li>▪ Verifier is satisfied with the mathematical calculations.</li> </ul>
9	4. Permanence	All Verifications	<p>1. PIA (if applicable)</p> <p>2. Calculation of credits using tonne-year accounting depending on the length of the contract per Equation 9.1.</p>	<p>Low</p> <p>Verification is complete if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Verifier affirms status (including length) of contract with the Reserve coincides with statements by the Forest Owner.</li> <li>▪ Verifier affirms that the PIA (if applicable) is executed and registered with the RAN in accordance with the MFP and guidance in the PIA. calculations of credits issued by Reporting Period are correct. Verifier should ensure each vintage (year in which removal enhancements occurred) is correctly calculated.</li> </ul>

Section of MFP	Verification Items	Required at	Materials to Review	Level of Professional Judgment and Verification Review Guidelines
9.2	5. Reversal determination	All Verifications	If a reversal has occurred, the verification body must check the type of reversal (avoidable or unavoidable), the extent of the reversal, and the compensation calculations.	Low to Moderate  Verification is complete when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verifiers confirm the source of the reversal is avoidable or unavoidable. If the reversal is avoidable the verifier must contact the Reserve for further action.</li> </ul>
9.2	6. Reversal Risk Rating	All Verifications	The calculation of the project's contribution to the buffer pool.	None  Verification is complete if the calculation for the buffer pool contribution has been correctly inserted into the calculation worksheet from the Forest Owner.

### 3.7 Project Social Safeguards

Verification bodies are required to review the Forest Owner's compliance with the Social Safeguards described in Section 3.8 and 10.2 of the protocol. The Social Safeguards must be checked in the project's initial verification and future desk verifications.

Section of MFP	Verification Items	Required at	Material to Review	Level of Professional Judgment and Verification Review Guidelines
3.8, 10.2	1. SS1 Forest Carbon Project Concepts	1. Initial Verification	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting agenda for meeting where presentation was made.</li> <li>A list of the names of all attendees, and, if available, their contact information.</li> <li>Meeting notes, including any follow up questions and comments.</li> </ol>	Low  Verification is complete if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>meeting notes have been archived following a community meeting or assembly and included in the PR.</li> <li>the meeting notes indicate costs and benefits were discussed at a community meeting or assembly.</li> <li>an agenda for the meeting or assembly has been included in the PR.</li> <li>a list of names of attendees and, if available, their contact information (verifier may interview attendees) has been included in the PR.</li> </ul>
3.8, 10.2	2. SS2 Anticipated Costs	1. Initial Verification	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assembly Act that indicates that costs were discussed during the meeting(s).</li> <li>Agenda for the meeting where the presentation was made.</li> <li>A list of the names of all attendees, and, if available, their contact information.</li> <li>Meeting notes, including any follow</li> </ol>	

Section of MFP	Verification Items	Required at	Material to Review	Level of Professional Judgment and Verification Review Guidelines
			up questions and comments.	
3.8, 10.2	3. SS3 Anticipated Benefits	1. Initial Verification	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assembly Act that indicates that benefits were discussed during the meeting(s).</li> <li>2. Agenda for the meeting where the presentation was made.</li> <li>3. A list of the names of all attendees, and, if available, their contact information.</li> <li>4. Meeting notes, including any follow up questions and comments.</li> </ol>	
3.8, 10.2	4. SS4 Project Approval	1. Initial Verification	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A copy of the results of the vote of the community members (i.e., Assembly Act).</li> <li>2. Agenda for the meeting where the presentation was made.</li> <li>3. A list of the names of all attendees, and, if available, their contact information.</li> <li>4. Meeting notes, including any follow up questions and comments.</li> </ol>	<p>Low</p> <p>Verification is complete if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a copy of the voting results is included in the PR.</li> <li>▪ an agenda for the meeting is archived and available for review.</li> <li>▪ a list of attendees is included in the PR (verifier may interview attendees as part of the verification).</li> <li>▪ meeting notes are archived and available for review.</li> </ul>
3.8, 10.2	5. SS5 Aggregate Approval	1. Site Visit required after entering or exiting an aggregate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A copy of the results of the vote of the community members (i.e., Assembly Act).</li> <li>2. Agenda for the meeting where the presentation was made.</li> <li>3. A list of the names of all attendees, and, if available, their contact information.</li> <li>4. Meeting notes, including any follow up questions and comments.</li> <li>5. Contract between Forest Owner and aggregate.</li> <li>6. Aggregate Entry or Exit form.</li> </ol>	<p>Low</p> <p>Verification is complete if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a copy of the voting results is archived and available for review.</li> <li>▪ an agenda for the meeting is archived and available for review.</li> <li>▪ a list of attendees is archived and available for review (verifier may interview attendees as part of the verification).</li> <li>▪ meeting notes are archived and available for review.</li> <li>▪ Copy of contract between Forest Owner and Aggregate is on file with the Reserve.</li> <li>▪ Aggregate Entry or Exit form is properly filled out and on file with the Reserve.</li> </ul>

Section of MFP	Verification Items	Required at	Material to Review	Level of Professional Judgment and Verification Review Guidelines
3.8, 10.2	6. SS6 Proper Notification	All Verifications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A description of how notices of meetings took place in order to include as many people as possible.</li> </ol>	<p>Low</p> <p>Verification is complete if the Project Report includes a description of meeting notices indicating a high level of effort to communicate with the community regarding the meeting or assembly in which the project was discussed and voted on.</p>
3.8, 10.2	7. SS7 Participation	All Verifications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Copies of sign-in sheets that are attached to the meeting agenda.</li> <li>2. Meeting notes that summarize community comments.</li> </ol>	<p>Very low</p> <p>Verification is complete if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ copies of the sign-in sheets are included in the PR.</li> <li>▪ summary notes of any comments raised during the meeting(s) in which the project was discussed are included in the PR.</li> </ul> <p>Verifier may interview community members present at the meeting(s) to determine if notes are consistent with community members' testimonies.</p>
3.8, 10.2	8. SS8 Meeting Documentation	All Verifications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meeting notes, accompanied with a description of how and when the meeting notes were made available to community members.</li> </ol>	<p>Very low</p> <p>Verification is complete if a description of how and when the meeting notes were made available to the community members is included in the PR.</p> <p>Verifier may interview community members present at the meeting(s) to determine if notes are consistent with community members' testimonies.</p>

Section of MFP	Verification Items	Required at	Material to Review	Level of Professional Judgment and Verification Review Guidelines
3.8, 10.2	9. SS9 Identification of a Project Coordinator	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initial Verification</li> <li>2. In the event of a change in Project Coordinator</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The description of the nomination and election/selection process included in the PR.</li> <li>2. Meeting notes that describe how the processes were reviewed in a public meeting and approved.</li> </ol>	<p>Low</p> <p>Verification is complete if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a description of the nomination and election/selection process is included in the PR.</li> <li>▪ meeting notes included in the PR indicate that the Project Coordinator was approved in a public meeting.</li> </ul> <p>Verifier may interview community members present at the meeting(s) to determine if notes are consistent with community members' testimonies.</p>
3.8, 10.2	10.SS10 Term of a Project Coordinator	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initial Verification</li> <li>2. In the event of a change in Project Coordinator</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A description of the term of Project Coordinator included in the PR.</li> <li>2. The process for renewing the term of Project Coordinator as addressed in the PR.</li> <li>3. Meeting notes that describe how the terms were discussed in a public meeting and approved.</li> </ol>	<p>Low</p> <p>Verification is complete if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a description of the term of the Project Coordinator is included in the PR.</li> <li>▪ the process of renewing the term of the Project Coordinator is addressed in the PR.</li> <li>▪ meeting notes included in the PR indicate that the term of the Project Coordinator was discussed and approved in a public meeting.</li> </ul> <p>Verifier may interview community members present at the meeting(s) to determine if notes are consistent with community members' testimonies.</p>
3.8, 10.2	11.SS11 Replacing the Project Coordinator	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initial Verification</li> <li>2. In the event of a change in Project Coordinator</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The process for how the Project Coordinator will be replaced included in the PR.</li> <li>2. Meeting notes that describe how the terms were discussed in a public meeting and approved.</li> </ol>	<p>Low</p> <p>Verification is complete if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the PR includes a description of the public process used to fill the role of the Project Coordinator.</li> <li>▪ meeting notes demonstrate that the public process described was fully implemented.</li> </ul>

### 3.8 Project Environmental Safeguards

All Forest Projects must promote and maintain a diversity of native species and utilize management practices that promote and maintain native forests comprised of multiple ages and mixed native species at multiple landscape scales. The verification body must evaluate the project against the environmental safeguards presented in Section 3. Forest project carbon stock inventories (requirements for which are contained in the Quantification Guidance) should be used as the basis of these assessments where applicable. Forest projects that do not initially meet these criteria but can demonstrate progress towards meeting these criteria within the required timelines are eligible to register and maintain that registration with the Reserve.

Section of MFP	Verification Items	Required at	Material to Review	Level of Professional Judgment and Verification Review Guidelines
3.9, 10.1.3	1. Environmental Safeguard 1: Standing Live and Dead Carbon Stocks	All Verifications	Carbon Monitoring Worksheet (CMW) must show maintenance or increase of Standing Live and Dead carbon stocks in Activity Areas as determined by a running 10-year average of carbon stocks within the Activity Areas.	None Verification is complete when verifier makes observation with CMW that annual monitoring is consistent with requirement. Verification cannot be completed if project does not meet this requirement prior to consultation from the Reserve. This condition is not evoked until the project has 10-years' worth of monitoring data.
3.9, 10.1.3	2. Environmental Safeguard 2: Native Species	All Site Verifications	Project carbon stock inventories and site visit observation must demonstrate progress toward a goal of 95% native species from CALCBOSK.	None Verification is complete when data is queried within CALCBOSK and the project indicates that it is in compliance with the native species requirement.  If the application indicates that the project is not in compliance with this requirement, verifier shall notify the Reserve.
3.9, 10.1.3, Table 3.1	3. Environmental Safeguard 3: Compositional Diversity of Native Species	All Site Verifications	Project carbon stock inventories and site visit observations must demonstrate continuous progress toward a compositional diversity of native species from CALCBOSK.	None Verification is complete when data is queried within CALCBOSK and the project indicates that it is in compliance with the native species requirement.  If the application indicates that the project is not in compliance with this requirement, verifier shall notify the Reserve.

Section of MFP	Verification Items	Required at	Material to Review	Level of Professional Judgment and Verification Review Guidelines
3.9, 10.1.3, Table 3.1	4. Environmental Safeguard 4: Unique Native Habitats	All Site Verifications	Monitoring Report must map all Unique Native Habitats within Activity Areas and site visit observations must demonstrate that there has been no net conversion caused by direct human intervention since last site verification.	None  Verification is complete when verifier makes observation that all Unique Native Habitats within Activity Areas have been properly identified and mapped and that the project is in compliance with Unique Native Habitat requirements.
3.9	5. Environmental Safeguard 5: harvest areas	All Site Verifications	Site visit observations must demonstrate that the project complies with the requirements of the Environmental Safeguard.	None  Verification is complete when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Verifier confirms that where harvest occurs within the Activity Areas in a contiguous area larger than 5 hectares, a tree, or group of trees, representative of the age cohort that was harvested, is no further than 100 meters from other trees, either within the harvest area or outside of the harvested area.</li> <li>▪ Verifier confirms that the project meets one of the exceptions to this requirement, related to salvaged trees, safety, ecological, or other rationale.</li> </ul>
3.9	6. Environmental Safeguard 6: Maintenance of forest carbon stocks throughout the Project Area	All Site Verifications	Monitoring Report for Maintenance of Forest Carbon Stocks in the Project Area	None  Verification is complete when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Verifier conducts an analysis of i-tree points and confirms data attributes are appropriate. Verification proceeds on a 10%/1% basis (random selection of 10% of the points and must be within 99% agreement). If verification is not satisfied with initial selection of 10%, an additional new group of 10% points is selected and the cumulative values are assessed. This is repeated until the analysis is satisfied. The benefit of the doubt should go to the Forest Owner on point attribution.</li> <li>▪ Verifier confirms that the Monitoring Report for Maintenance of Forest Landcover in the Project Area was submitted and conducted accurately.</li> </ul>

## 4 Verifying Carbon Inventories

Verification bodies are required to verify carbon stock inventory estimates of all sampled carbon pools within the Activity Areas. Inventories of carbon stocks are used to determine the project baseline and to quantify GHG removals against the project baseline over time. Verification of carbon inventories consists of ensuring the Forest Owner's sampling methodology conforms to requirements listed in the protocol and that the project's inventory sample plots are within specified tolerances when compared to the verifier's sample plots. Verification is effectively an audit to confirm that the inventory estimate is sound. Verification of the project's onsite stocks must occur at each site verification and focus on ensuring that the project's inventory methodology is technically sound and correctly implemented.

### 4.1 Sequential Sampling for Verification

The Mexico Forest Protocol utilizes a sequential sampling method for verification of project estimates. Sequential sampling is intended to provide an efficient sampling method for verifiers to determine if randomly selected project measurements are within specified tolerance bounds established by the protocol. The Reserve provides an online worksheet for verifiers to download to facilitate the sequential sampling analysis.

Sequential approaches have stopping rules rather than fixed sample sizes. Verification is successful after a minimum number of successive plots in a sequence indicate agreement. Where the stopping rules indicate the potential presence of a bias, additional verification plots may be collected after that time if it is felt that random chance may have caused the test to fail and a convergence towards agreement is expected with additional verification samples.

The results of any additional verification plot may also be inconclusive and require additional verification plots for a determination to be made. For effective application of the sequential statistics in the field, the determination of when the stopping rule is met is conducted after a group of the randomly selected plots have been measured in the field. This can be conducted after the minimum number of plots has been measured by the verifier, or as frequently as needed. The data can also be entered in the field, if portable computers are available, where the most rapid conclusion to verification might be determined.

To increase efficiency in the verification process, three different levels of sequential sampling are performed by the verifier. All tests are performed with the same randomly selected plots and can only be completed by analysis of the plots in the sequential order they were selected. The data identified below used for each test are input into the appropriate sequential sampling tool. In the case of the test of CO<sub>2</sub>e/hectare, the field data are input into a verifier's version of CALC BOSK to provide a CO<sub>2</sub>e/hectare value.

- **Diameter Test:** A comparison of diameter data between the verifier and the Forest Owner is conducted on a tree by tree basis until sequential sampling rules have been achieved, indicating that the verifier and Forest Owner measurements of diameter are aligned within acceptable tolerance levels. If and when the stopping rules are met, verifiers will use the diameter data provided for each tree from the Forest Owner's database for any additional data inputs needed for the CO<sub>2</sub>e/hectare comparison.
- **Height Test:** Like the diameter test, a comparison of height data is performed between the verifier and the Forest Owner until sequential sampling rules have been achieved, indicating that the verifier and Forest Owner measurements of height are aligned within acceptable tolerance levels. If and when the stopping rules are met, verifiers will use the

height data provided for each tree from the Forest Owner's database for any additional data inputs needed for the CO<sub>2</sub>e/hectare comparison.

- CO<sub>2</sub>e/hectare: The testing of inventory data can only be satisfied when the CO<sub>2</sub>e/hectare comparison between the verifier and Forest Owner is completed. This test is conducted on a plot by plot basis using estimates of CO<sub>2</sub>e/hectare. The verifier's estimates of CO<sub>2</sub>e/hectare are derived by measurements of diameter and height (measured by verifier or using Forest Owner's data, as described above), species determination, defect and decay determination, and a determination of the appropriate trees to be included in the sample ('in' or 'out' trees).

#### 4.1.1 Inventory Estimates

The inventory estimate developed by the Forest Owner must meet the minimum precision threshold stated in the Mexico Forest Protocol Quantification Guidance of +/- 20% at the 90% confidence interval. CALCBOISK provides for a quick check of the projects inventory confidence. The inventory confidence output from CALCBOISK should be input into the Reserve's calculation worksheet. Forest Owners can improve the precision of their estimates through additional inventory effort.

## 4.2 Measurement Specifics for Verifiers for Sequential Sampling

The following standards shall guide verifier measurements:

- Verifiers shall measure all diameters (DBH) of 'in' trees on plots until sequential sampling requirements for diameters are met. If and when met, verifiers can accept the diameter measurement data of the Forest Owner.
- Verifiers shall measure the heights of all trees until sequential sampling requirements for heights are met. If and when met, verifiers can accept the height data of the Forest Owner. The use of regressions to estimate heights is allowable for Forest Owners; verifiers must measure each height for comparison with Forest Owners' estimates (until sequential sampling requirements are met). In cases where distance measurements are used to determine height, the tools used to determine distance measurements must be able to obtain an accuracy of +/- 10 cm for each 10 m of height.
- Verifiers shall measure plot boundaries where trees are not obviously 'in' or 'out of the fixed area plots. Tools and methods used for distance measurements for plot boundaries should be able to obtain an accuracy of 1cm for each 10 m of distance.
- Special Rules for 'in'/'out' trees: Verifiers may encounter trees that are 'in', either in the large tree plot or the small tree plot, that were not measured by the Forest Owner. The cause of the omission(s) may be that the trees were determined to be too small to be included, per sampling methodology criteria, at the time of the Forest Owner measurement. Similarly, trees that were determined to be too small in the large plot by the Forest Owner, i.e., less than 30cm, may have grown and now exceed the 30 cm threshold for inclusion.

The verifier shall not include trees in the verifier measurements (for sequential sampling purposes) if the tree was omitted by the Forest Owner and the tree diameters, at time of verification audit, are less than 33 cm for the large plot and less than 8 cm for the small plot. Similarly, trees that were included by the Forest Owner in the small plot and, at the

time of verifier audit, are less than 33 cm shall continue to be entered in the small tree plot, such that the expansion values are consistent with those of the Forest Owner. This applies a reasonable cushion to Forest Owners who apply the sampling methodology correctly, but through no fault of their own are penalized due to forest growth changing measurement parameters. It should be noted that the cushion is minimal and will not relieve Forest Owners from growth over long periods of time that would exceed the cushion allowances. Hence, Forest Owners need to base the re-measurement of the plots on an adequate timeframe to avoid verification problems with their inventory data. Any trees that do not meet the criteria of the standards listed above shall be included as part of the verifier's plot estimate for purposes of sequential sampling.

- Verifiers shall insert their own determination of species for each tree included in the verifier's inventory.
- For defect and decay (vigor classification), verifiers may first consider the inputs of the Forest Owner and determine whether or not they were reasonable. If considered reasonable, the verifier may insert the same classification as the Forest Owner for each tree included in the verifier's inventory. If, however, not considered reasonable, or not recorded by the Forest Owner, the verifier shall insert their own determination.

### 4.3 Selection of Inventory Plots

The verifier shall select the plots randomly, using CALCBOSK to produce a list of randomly output plots. The verifier shall upload a copy of the randomly selected plots, in the order selected by CALCBOSK, on their Reserve account prior to implementing field verification activities. It is required that the verifier apply the random order selection in the sequential sampling worksheets. The verifier is free to measure the set of plots that were randomly selected in any order that provides the greatest efficiency while sampling in the field, but when the verifier inputs data into the sequential sampling spreadsheets, the verifier must follow the random selection order to properly conduct the analysis and maintain the integrity of sequential analysis. This may provide significant efficiencies when selected stands and/or plots are in close geographic proximity and it is hypothesized that the stopping rules will require the additional plots that are in close proximity.

The main statistical test used to evaluate the Forest Owner's inventory is based on a comparison of the verifier's measurements of plots, calculated as CO<sub>2</sub>e per hectare compared to the Forest Owner's measurements of plots, which may include adjustments from originally field-sampled data to account for growth. The inventory verification is complete when a minimum of 5 plots are identified as 'passing' in sequence in the Sequential Sampling Tool for plot CO<sub>2</sub>e per hectare.

There are many factors that influence the quality of plot data developed by the Forest Owner, including, but not limited to:

- Diameter measurements
- Height measurements
- Species Identification
- Trees attributed to the wrong subplot, i.e., small trees included in the large plot or large trees entered in the small tree portion of the data entry form in CALCBOSK, leading to gross over-estimations of plot values.
- Trees that are measured as inside the fixed area plot and the converse, trees included in

- the plot that shouldn't be.
- Trees completely missed during the plot measurements.
- Trees that are measured on the plot that have fallen.

Additionally, plot data are 'grown' in CALCBOSK to adjust measurements for tree growth that may introduce further variation between verified measurements and project data.

The Reserve has developed tools that increase verification efficiencies where it can be justified to do so. Specifically, where verification findings are closely aligning with project data for diameters and heights for successive plots, according to quality control thresholds developed by the Reserve, verification of plot measurements may continue without further measurement of the Forest Owner's diameter and/or height measurements and proceed to evaluating other aspects of plot measurements.

A tool has been developed for verifiers to perform the comparison of diameter and height measurements and is available on the Reserve's website<sup>1</sup>. The tool identifies at which point the verifier may discontinue measuring diameter and/or height measurements with stopping rules. The stopping rules require a minimum of 40 trees be measured which must come from plots that are in the sequential order produced from CALCBOSK. Additionally, the trees on the plots must be entered in the tool in the order the trees exist on the plot, beginning with the small trees (A-n) and proceeding to the larger trees (1-n). If, after 40 trees (or more) have been measured and the comparison of verifier and Forest Owner data are within the thresholds shown in Table 1, further measurements are discontinued, the verifier will accept the Forest Owner's measurements for the variable they have demonstrated adequacy, and the verifier will focus on other plot variables, as mentioned above.

**Table 1.** Threshold variables that define the stopping rules for verification of diameters and heights

Variables		Threshold
Minimum number of trees sampled		40 trees
<b>Diameter</b>		
Mean average difference of measurements	High threshold	0.635 cm
	Low threshold	-0.635 cm
Standard deviation of the difference of measurements		2.54 cm
<b>Height</b>		
Mean average difference of measurements	High threshold	0.32 m
	Low threshold	-0.32 m
Standard deviation of the difference of measurements		1.80 m

The stopping rules are based on a comparison of diameters and heights that are measured by the Forest Owner. Missed trees are not included in the stopping rules used to assert adequacy of diameter and height measurements but must be included in the overall plot comparison of CO<sub>2</sub>e in the main sequential sampling test. Trees that have been measured by the Forest Owner erroneously, that is they're not actually in the plot, will not be used as part of the stopping rules for diameters and heights. Verifiers may use professional judgement for trees that have fallen based on the ability to obtain accurate measurements.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.climateactionreserve.org/how/protocols/mexico-forest/>

## 5 Completing the Verification Process

After completing the core project verification activities for a Forest Project, the verification body must take the following steps. Each document listed is discussed in greater detail below.

1. Complete a Verification Report to be delivered to the Forest Owner (public document).
2. Complete a detailed List of Findings containing both immaterial and material findings (if any), and deliver it to the Forest Owner (private document).
3. Prepare a concise Verification Statement detailing the vintage and the number of GHG removals verified, and deliver it to the Forest Owner (public document).
4. Verify that the number of GHG removals, as well as the reversal risk rating, specified in the Verification Report and Statement match the number entered into the Reserve system.
5. Conduct an exit meeting with the Forest Owner to discuss the Verification Report, List of Findings, and Verification Statement and determine if material misstatements (if any) can be corrected. If so, the verification body and Forest Owner should schedule a second set of verification activities after the Forest Owner has revised the project submission.
6. If a reasonable level of assurance is successfully obtained, upload electronic copies of the Verification Report, List of Findings, Verification Statement, and optional Verification Activity Log into the Reserve system.
7. Return important records and documents to the Forest Owner for retention.

The Verification Report is a transparent, overarching document that is produced by the verification body for the project developer, and is also made available to the Reserve and the public. This document is a detailed summary and scope of verification activities undertaken.

The Verification Statement is the official confirmation and final statement of findings during the verification process, detailing the number of CRTs issued, the vintages (if more than one) and the standard used to verify those CRTs. The Verification Statement confirms the verification activities and outcomes for all stakeholders (Forest Owners, verifiers, the Reserve, and the public).

Verifiers may also complete an optional Project Verification Activity Log, which is designed to help verifiers understand the minimum requirements for verification activities specific to a project type. This document is private and only available for the Reserve and the project developer to view. The logs are available for download on the website and may be uploaded into the Reserve when verification activities have been completed.

Finally, the List of Findings identifies and details all material and immaterial findings identified by the verifier throughout the verification. The List of Findings should be delivered first to the project developer to allow them the opportunity to correct any issues found during the course of verification that might impact CRT registration. The List of Findings submitted to the Reserve should represent a summary of all findings and resolutions throughout the verification process. The document will remain private.

The Verification Report and Verification Statement shall be submitted at the conclusion of verification. If a project is deemed ineligible or noncompliant with a protocol to the extent that it can no longer move forward, verification bodies shall submit only their Verification Statement and List of Findings in the same manner noted above.

Further guidance for the Verification Report, Verification Statement, Verification Activity Log, and List of Findings can be found in Section 11 of the MFP and the Reserve's Verification Program Manual. The Verification Program Manual also provides further guidance on quality assurance, negative verification statements, goals for exit meetings, dispute resolution, and record keeping.