



Forest Project Protocol V5.0

Protocol Summary for Landowners

Protocol Overview

Two project types: Improved Forest Management and Avoided Conversion

- All projects increase forest carbon sequestration, decrease forest carbon emissions, or both, compared to baseline management practices
- The protocol provides standardized methods to account for net changes in standing live trees, standing dead trees, and harvested wood products, as well as CO₂ emissions associated with site preparation in certain cases
- Projects must enter into an agreement with the Reserve to maintain carbon storage for a period of 100 years after credits are issued

Project Requirements

Location: Project must be within the U.S. Avoided Conversion projects may also be within U.S. Territories.

Project Initiation and Duration: A project begins when an eligible activity is undertaken, such as submitting project documents to the Reserve, recording a conservation easement, or acquiring the project land. Eligible activities to initiate a project vary by project type. Projects may continue to receive credit for increased sequestration or decreased emissions for a period of 100 years.

Additionality:

- Legal Requirement Test: No federal, state or local laws, statutes, rules, regulations or ordinances, court orders or other legally binding mandates require the project activity.
- Performance Test: Projects must achieve greenhouse gas reductions or removals above and beyond “business as usual” activities. This means that a project will determine a baseline, and will receive credit for any carbon storage above and beyond that baseline level.

Permanence of Carbon Storage: Carbon sequestered by a project must remain stored in the forest or in wood products for 100 years. A “reversal” occurs when forest carbon that has been issued CRTs is re-emitted to the atmosphere. Harvesting is permitted, but must be compensated for by growth in the forest, or else an avoidable reversal may be determined to have taken place (see below).

- *Unavoidable reversals* (fires, insects, hurricanes, etc.) are compensated with credits in a shared “buffer pool”. Every project contributes to the buffer pool, and this pool acts as an insurance mechanism for projects participating in the program.
- *Avoidable reversals* (excessive harvesting or unenrolling portions of the project area) or *computational reversals* (changes in the quantification of carbon sequestered due to required protocol equations and/or deductions) must be compensated for by the forest owner or project operator by returning an adequate number of CRTs.

Environmental Safeguards:

- Maintenance/Increase of Trees: Projects are required to maintain and/or increase carbon in live trees.
- Native Species: Projects are required to manage native forest species. A project can have up to 5 percent non-native species, but plantations consisting entirely of exotic species are not allowed.
- Diversity of Age Classes: No more than 40 percent of forested stands can be in age classes less than 20 years of age.
- Ecosystem Structure: The protocol contains requirements for the recruitment and retention of lying dead wood and standing dead trees. Dead wood should not be actively removed from the project unless it poses a safety hazard.
- Regulatory Compliance: Where applicable, projects must be in compliance with all laws directly related to forest project activities. Examples include the Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act.

Project Monitoring: A monitoring report must be completed annually until 100 years following the final issuance of credits to a project.

- Tools for Project Monitoring: CARIT (Climate Action Reserve Inventory Tool) and SIM (Standardized Inventory Methodology)
 - SIM: A free, pre-verified inventory methodology, providing best practices for setting up a project inventory
 - CARIT: A free, pre-validated Access database tool, which helps landowners manage their inventory
 - One easy tool to input tree/plot/strata data, link to a growth model, grow plots, and calculate carbon automatically for project monitoring

Verification Schedule: Projects must undergo verification by an independent third party trained and approved by the Reserve. Initial verification must include a site visit, and site verifications must occur every six years thereafter.

Resources

- Forest Project Protocol: <https://bit.ly/3780wUn>
- Financial feasibility tool: <https://bit.ly/2NfmkY8>
- Climate Action Reserve Inventory Tool (CARIT): <https://bit.ly/1imcAla>
- Standardized Inventory Methodology (SIM): <https://bit.ly/2QvI5kr>

Important Note: This is a summary of the protocol. Please read the full protocol for a complete description of project requirements.