



[CAR extends forestry protocol](#)

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The Climate Action Reserve (CAR) has revised its protocol for awarding carbon credits to forestry projects to cover all of the US, not just California, expanding opportunities for developers of forest conservation and restoration projects. Many other changes were made to the protocol, following almost two years of work and consideration of more than 300 pages of public comments.

The CAR board of directors approved version 3.0 of its Forest Project Protocol at a meeting last week, though some market participants are awaiting a final stamp of approval from California's Air Resources Board (ARB) – due on 25 September – before pressing ahead with employing the protocol.

The previous versions of the protocol only covered activities in the state of California, where three projects have been successfully registered and a further six are seeking registration.

The Conservation Fund, a US non-profit environmental group, has registered two projects and has sold some 1.2 million carbon credits from these. Its California programme director Chris Kelly said the previous version of the protocol “has been instrumental in establishing a credible and valuable, domestic market for forest-based carbon offsets. The adoption of version 3.0 of the Forest Project Protocol will extend this market to forest landowners throughout the country and dramatically increase the role of forests in combating climate change.”

Gerrity Lansing, CEO of Equator Environmental, a New York-based environmental asset manager, said the updated protocol would have value because of its transparent development that involved many stakeholders. “This is the first compliance-grade protocol anywhere in the world involving long-term forestry carbon credits,” he said.

The firm said the CAR protocol would be “on a very short” list of protocols it would consider for forestry projects, contingent on the approval by the ARB.

The forestry sector is likely to be a key source of domestic offsets under a potential federal US cap-and-trade scheme, and CAR offsets are recognised as ‘early action’ credits under the Waxman-Markey bill passed by the House of Representatives.

Other changes to the protocol include:

- standardised requirements and improved guidance for estimating baselines for reforestation, improved forest management and avoided conversion projects;
- an option for registering reforestation projects on lands that have recently undergone a significant natural disturbance, for example, fires;
- explicit requirements and mechanisms to ensure permanence of credited greenhouse gas reductions;
- improved requirements for more comprehensively addressing leakage, where a project to conserve a forest simply displaces deforestation to other areas;
- requirements and guidance for accounting for carbon in harvested wood products; and
- refinement of the definition of “natural forest management”.