

CRTs will count as early action: official

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A California official said Climate Action Reserve offsets will likely be allowed in the state's carbon market.

Linda Adams, state secretary for environmental protection and chair of CAR's board, said she is "very confident" that the standard-making body's voluntary offset protocols will be approved for compliance under California's mandatory cap-and-trade programme.

The protocols, guidelines for offset project design, had initially been adopted by California's air quality regulator – the Air Resources Board (Carb) – for voluntary greenhouse gas reduction projects.

That endorsement effectively meant that the voluntary offsets generated from those projects, known as Climate Reserve Tonnes (CRTs), would likely have been considered "early action" credits in California's future emissions trading scheme.

But Carb recently told officials at CAR it plans to withdraw its adoption of those protocols – three forestry and one dairy digester – and require all voluntary carbon offset protocols to undergo a formal environmental review process first.

The withdrawal could discourage early action in the voluntary carbon market as many buyers have expected that projects designed under the CAR protocols would automatically be allowed in California's emissions trading scheme because they had been endorsed by Carb.

Adams dismissed the review process as merely "procedural", and said it was necessary for California's transition from a pre-compliance voluntary market into a compliance carbon market.

"We feel very confident that since we've adopted the most stringent standards in the world, it's highly likely that these projects will be given credit for early action," she told Point Carbon News on Thursday.

No pressure

She also denied the board was bowing to pressure from environmental groups like the Center for Biological Diversity, which has challenged the environmental integrity of the forestry protocols.

"It's very possible that Carb would have taken exactly the same action with or without this letter from the Center for Biological Diversity," Adams said.

She said she will work hard to ensure Carb acknowledges the CRTs issued by CAR.

"As chair of the reserve, I will be pushing to ensure that the air resources board does give that credit."

Adams, who is also heads the California Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), denied she has any influence over the decisions of the 11-member board, despite that fact that Carb operates under the EPA.

"They report to the governor through me, but I do not direct the board to do anything," she said, noting that the board members are appointed by the governor

"My chairmanship of the nonprofit is not a conflict," Adams said.

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