



# Forest Project Protocol V4.0

## Protocol Summary

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### Protocol Overview

Three project types: Reforestation, 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 onsite and offsite forest carbon pools, as well as CO<sub>2</sub> emissions associated with site preparation in certain cases
- Projects must maintain carbon storage for a period of 100 years after credits are issued
- Projects must demonstrate clear ownership of forest carbon

### Project Requirements

**Location:** Project must be within the U.S., now including Hawaii. Avoided Conversion and Reforestation projects may also be within U.S. Territories.

**Project Initiation and Duration:** The start date of a project is the date on which activities are initiated that lead to increased sequestration or decreased emissions relative to the project's baseline. 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 (determined through a standardized baseline assessment)

**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 is re-emitted to the atmosphere.

- *Unavoidable reversals* (fires, insects, hurricanes, etc.) are compensated with credits in a shared buffer pool; every project contributes to the buffer pool
- *Avoidable reversals* (harvesting trees) must be compensated for by the forest owner or project operator

#### Environmental Safeguards:

- Maintenance/Increase of Trees: Projects are required to maintain and/or increase carbon in live trees and sustain the requirement for 100 years
- Native Species: Projects are required to manage native forest species; plantations 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; this requirement, together with the requirement for the maintenance/increase of trees, implies a minimum rotation age of 50 years
- Ecosystem Structure: The protocol contains requirements for the recruitment and retention of structural elements (lying dead wood and standing dead trees) important for ecosystem functions
- Regulatory Compliance: Projects must be in compliance with all applicable laws directly related to forest project activities and project operators must sign an Attestation of Regulatory Compliance at the end of each reporting period

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

**Verification Schedule:** Verification with a site visit occurs at project initiation. Subsequent site verifications must occur every six years (although reforestation projects can delay the second site visit until seedlings have adequate biomass). Standardized verification guidance is provided in the protocol.

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

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