

Summary notes US Forest Technical Working Group #8

February 4, 2025

Recording of meeting



Topic 1 – CARB Taskforce recommendations related to conservation easements

Corrections, context, and clarifications related to conservation easements

- Ecology should consider whether a revision of the QCE definition is warranted
- QCE's have been quite rare in CARB's program
- It's difficult to align the start of the conservation easement with the start of the carbon project. Easements with encumbrances impact the baseline
- Easements must cover at least the length of the project commitment.
- Existing QCE requirements may require proponents to end a shorter-term easement and enroll in a longer-term easement, which poses a barrier
- Demonstrating that avoided conversion projects are truly at risk of conversion is also a significant barrier to project development
- Establishing a QCE after a baseline has been established may impact the feasibility of planned harvest modeled in the baseline

Would this change significantly impact the viability of projects that include a conservation easement? Why or why not?

- Other avoided conversion requirements – including easement length, baseline quantification requirements, and appraisal requirements are likely to be more salient

What additional risks does this conservation easement flexibility introduce in the market and how could those risks be mitigated?

- This change would raise additionality questions, which ought to be addressed in the protocol if this revision is adopted

Topic 2 – Alternative Baseline Approach: Silviculture based approach to IFM baseline

Clarifications/questions for John Nickerson on a concept of a silviculture based on IFM baseline

- The specific application of silvicultural has a significant impact on the carbon stored by that practice. For example shifting from uneven-aged management to even-aged management could result in greater carbon storage in some cases.
- Avoided emissions could be an added component of this framework
 - The Reserve's Climate Forward program has a protocol to issue ex ante credits tied to avoided emissions
 - Precise modeling of fire risk reduction is very difficult - both in quantification and verification

- CCQI analyzed the most common activity types in IFM projects; extended rotation, production to conservation, increasing productivity, and reduced impact logging were the most common practices. Many projects included multiple activities.
- Shorter term project length (based on tonne-year accounting) presents compatibility questions with other issued offsets and program allowances



Would this approach result in credit issuance that is more conservative or rigorously quantified than the existing baseline approach? Why or why not?

- The strength of the underlying modeling of silvicultural practice outcomes would determine whether this approach is more or less rigorous than the status quo
- An alternative approach may be to base a protocol around a “no investment” baseline
- A key question is whether it’s appropriate for offsets to pay a landowner to increase the carbon sequestration rate, regardless of whether that forest is maintained or stored in wood products or other byproducts
- A compliance offset program should require a high level of precision in quantification that could be at odds with more flexible baseline concepts
- The modeling required for this approach would be significant, and the strength of the modeling would determine the overall impact

Would this approach reduce barriers or cost of project development compared with the existing approach? Why or why not?

- The silvicultural baseline could significantly reduce costs and allow for more projects to be developed by small landowners
- A silvicultural baseline may help improve transparency of the offsets in the program, but this change would significantly change the types of lands and landowners participating in the market – advantaging some and disadvantaging others

Is this approach implementable?

- The modeling effort will be significant – and would be best completed by a university or other 3rd party
- Most IFM projects are feasible because of the initial flush of credits because the project starts off above common practice, many of these projects may not be feasible with a baseline that provides credits more incrementally

What remaining questions or areas of uncertainty do you have about this concept?

- Application to public lands should be considered – a silvicultural approach may better meet the needs of projects on public lands than the existing IFM public lands baseline quantification approach