



US Forest Offset Technical Working Group Charter

Background

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) announced a rulemaking on September 12, 2023. Ecology is considering amendments to Chapter 173-446 WAC to address new and revised Cap-and-Invest offset protocols. The scope of this rulemaking will include consideration of protocol updates or the addition of new protocols to increase the potential breadth of offset projects that can be issued credits within the Cap-and-Invest program, as directed by RCW 70A.65.170(4)(b). This statute directs Ecology to conduct rulemaking that ensures that any updates or additions to the offset program are both 1) based in the best available science, and 2) support the needs of landowners and communities in Washington state.

Adaption, development, and adoption of new offset protocols must both reflect the legal requirement that compliance offset credits be real, permanent, quantifiable, verifiable, enforceable, and additional while also meeting the needs of project developers in order to be viable in the market. Any new protocols or revisions to existing protocols would be adopted in a revision to the rule in order to ensure the integrity of any future protocols and to integrate a diversity of perspectives in the new protocol evaluation process. Ecology will convene protocol-specific technical working groups to provide input on specific topics related to revisions. Ecology's rulemaking process will be informed by perspectives of those with a lived or professional experience with overburdened communities.

The US Forest Offset Protocol Technical Working Group is intended to support the programmatic goals of increasing methodological rigor, improving feasibility of project development of small forest landowners and non-traditional ownership structures, reducing unnecessary costs, risks, and administrative burdens to project development, and updating the protocol based on the best available science.

Membership

The US Forest Offset Technical Working Group is composed of individuals who will provide input on specific technical considerations related US Forest Offset protocols. The working group will be composed of individuals with experience or expertise related to the development, implementation, registration, or verification of offset protocols relevant to the scope of the US Forest Offset Technical Working Group.

The working group will be composed of individuals who respond to Ecology's solicitation for working group members and will be selected based on experience relevant to the US Forest Offset protocol. Members may be added, should Ecology and/or the working group identify gaps in the interests represented at the table.

Desired Outcomes

Technical working group members will provide input on Ecology on specific topics related to the offset protocol, which Ecology will use to inform its rulemaking, in tandem with public comment, Tribal consultation, input the Environmental Justice Council and Environmental Justice Offset Working Group,

along with internal review. **The technical working group will not be asked to provide consensus recommendations to Ecology, rather individual perspectives will be solicited via a facilitated group discussion.**

Ecology commits to genuine and meaningful consideration of the insights, recommendations, and advice provided by the technical working group. Ecology commits to facilitating a fair process and maintaining an accurate record of members' insights, advice, and deliberations.

Participation by Tribal Nations staff in this technical working group is not a substitute for, nor does it constitute, formal government-to-government consultation. Ecology staff will be responsible for outreach to Tribal Nations and responsive to requests for Tribal consultation.

US Forest Offset Technical Working Group Meeting Logistics

1. The US Forest Offset Technical Working Group will meet approximately every month from July 2024 through December 2024, with additional meetings scheduled as needed.
2. Technical working group meetings will be virtual and use Zoom. If Ecology hosts an in-person meeting, Ecology will provide remote viewing options by phone or web.
3. Technical working group meetings will generally be two hours in duration.
4. There is no quorum requirement—members present and active at each meeting have the authority to continue to work in the absence of others.
5. Technical working group agendas and pre-meeting materials will be posted to Ecology's [US Forest Offset Working Group website](#) and generally distributed to working group members at least one week in advance of meetings. Summaries will generally be posted within two weeks after meetings.
6. Working group members are expected to prepare for meetings by reviewing the meeting packet. Following each meeting, members are expected to review the summary notes to ensure summary notes adequately capture their perspective.
7. Summaries of each meeting will include key points and outcomes of discussions. Individual perspectives and differences of opinion may be attributed to individuals.
8. As members will be seated based on their technical experience, every effort will be made to provide an opportunity for input ahead of any meeting a member anticipates missing.
9. Participation does not imply or presume agreement with, or support for, any action taken by Ecology in response to input from technical working group members.
10. Recognizing that public characterizations of meeting deliberations could affect the technical working group relationships, members are specifically requested to refrain from characterizing the views of other panel members in any public statements they may make.
11. Media inquiries about the process will be directed to Ecology's Climate Pollution Reduction Program Manager, Caroline Halter (caroline.halter@ecy.wa.gov).
12. Members who change employment/affiliation agree to notify Ecology as soon as possible. Ecology will make a determination whether it is appropriate for the member to continue to serve on the panel, or if another person from the same organization may be appointed.

Public Participation

Meeting attendance will be open to the public. Meeting recordings will be available upon request.

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To enable the public to track technical working group meetings, Ecology will provide updated information on the agency's website and through the self-subscribing [Cap-and-Invest Offset email lists](#). Meeting materials will be posted on the [working group's webpage](#). Posted information will include:

- Meeting dates
- Agendas
- Meeting summaries

Each meeting will include a public comment period for members of the public to provide feedback and input. Neither Ecology nor technical working members will respond to comments made during a meeting.

Ecology will also accept written public comment relevant to the technical working group's discussion at any time through the [Offset Rulemaking EComments site](#).

Member Commitment

Working Group Members agree to:

- Active and good faith participation in the group
- Demonstrate attentiveness when others are speaking
- Behave constructively and respectfully towards all participants both within and outside of meetings
- Respect the role of the facilitator to guide the group process

Disagreement and differences of opinion are acknowledged, explored, understood, and appreciated. Should conflict arise, it will be addressed with the guidance of the facilitator. While not anticipated, recurring unproductive individual behavior may result in Ecology respectfully excusing that individual from the technical working group.

Contact

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