

Creating Urban Forests to address Climate Change

September 5, 2008

Draft

Introduction:

The working group recommends that afforestation projects should not be considered for carbon offsets. Afforestation projects are defined as trees planted where they have not traditionally nor historically occurred; the working group decided that this concept will not be included in our recommendations. The working group did not see an opportunity afforestation projects in our state and where opportunities might exist, they would be controversial such as replacing native shrub steppe with trees.

Instead, our working group is using the concept of "Reforestation" which is the planting of trees where they have been historically or traditionally found. Reforestation does not include tree planting required under the Forest Practices Board regulations. Rather, our working group focused on reforestation in urban areas. We anticipate that some reforestation projects, depending on their size and location, could come under the Active Forest Management Protocols.

Recommendation:

The Forestry Working Group acknowledges that urban forests allow local jurisdictions to permanently increase carbon storage in trees. Therefore, the Forestry Working Group recommends that:

1. The State establish policies and programs to give local jurisdictions incentives to inventory, increase and maintain urban forests.
2. An **amended** form of the California Registry's Urban Forest Project Reporting Protocols should be used as guidance to account for and report greenhouse gas emissions. (**Working Group: how much detail do we want from CA protocols?**)
3. The amended California protocol be applied to urban forest lands as defined in RCW 76.15.010
4. The amended California protocols should be included in current urban forest programs in two state agencies administering urban forest programs (Community Trade and Economic Development and Department of Natural Resources).
5. Regardless of how the California protocols are amended, for ease of implementation in Washington, tree growth tables must be developed for urban forest species grown in Washington climates.
6. Local jurisdictions should have the option of using the Active Forest Management Protocols on urban forest lands as well as the amended California protocols.

Definitions:

"Urban forest lands" are defined in RCW 76.15.010:

"Community and urban forest" is that land in and around human settlements ranging from small communities to metropolitan areas, occupied or potentially occupied by trees and associated vegetation. Community and urban forest land may be planted or

unplanted, used or unused, and includes public and private lands, lands along transportation and utility corridors, and forested watershed lands within populated areas.

Urban Forests reduce CO2:

Increasing levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases (GHG) in the atmosphere are of growing concern globally and locally, and increasing urban forests plays a role in the fight against climate change. Urban forests reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide directly and indirectly. Urban forests and trees around buildings can **directly** reduce the need for heating and air conditioning use, thereby reducing emission of GHGs associated with consuming electricity, natural gas and fuel oil. Also, when trees normally die off, the stored carbon is released into the atmosphere through decomposition. If the biomass from removed trees is, instead, used as feedstock for power plants, then GHG that would have occurred with other fuel sources are displaced. This **indirect** benefit may be quantified and reported as a benefit of urban forests.

California's Urban Forest protocols

In July 2008, The California Climate Action Registry released a draft Protocol describes, in detail, how to create, maintain and calculate urban forest sites. Through its Climate Action Reserve Program, the California Registry supplies protocols to quantify GHG emission reductions (or offsets). The protocols clearly define project sites and boundaries; ownership (municipality, educational institution, utility, and/or a person/organization working in partnership with any of the entities); issues regarding additionality, leakage, complying with existing regulation; GHG assessment boundaries and reduction calculation methods; quantifying CO2 sequestration; permanence of a project for 100 years; and finally, on-going tree monitoring and maintenance plans. The Reserve oversees and accredits independent third-party verifiers. Meeting these Protocol requirements allows the site to qualify for offsets.

Washington State's Urban Forest Program

The 2008 Legislature established a statewide "Evergreen Communities" urban forest program (E2SHB 2844) to increase the environmental and social benefits from urban forests. The legislature appropriated funds to Community Trade and Economic Development (CTED) and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to:

- research existing urban forests programs
- develop a model ordinance for local government
- develop criteria which could qualify local governments for future funding
- assess and inventory two counties' urban forests
- create model on how to conduct such inventories

The Forestry Working Group should encourage CTED and DNR to include amended California's Protocols as part of the new Urban Forest program in Washington. Furthermore, the working group should support legislative funding a grants program within CTED for local governments to create urban forest projects as defined in the amended California Protocol.