

Request for Proposals for Carbon Offset Projects

Introduction:

The Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) is a global conservation organization, with the mission to "... advance the science and practice of conserving the Earth's biological diversity." SCB has long recognized the threat that global climate change poses to the natural world and human communities, and directed a great deal of attention to this issue within the spheres of academia, policy, and conservation practice. In 2006 SCB formed an Ecological Footprint Committee (EFC) to help measure and reduce the ecological impacts of SCB's operations. A major activity of the EFC has been to identify appropriate carbon offset projects, which allow SCB to mitigate the annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of the organization and the International Congress on Conservation Biology (ICCB) meetings. More information about the EFC can be found here:

<http://www.conbio.org/Activities/Committees/EcologicalFootprint/CarbonOffset/index.CFM>.

The EFC has recently decided to continue SCB's carbon offset program for the next 3 ICCB meetings (2010, 2011, and 2013) and the next 4 years of SCB operations (2010-2013) with a new carbon offset project: the Wild Rose Conservation Site in southern Alberta. More information about the Wild Rose project can be found here:

<http://www.conbio.org/Activities/Committees/EcologicalFootprint/CarbonOffset/wildrose.cfm>.

Potential need for an additional carbon offset project:

Because the Wild Rose project is based on avoiding GHG emissions into the future, the EFC has already established a conservative "cap" on the volume of carbon offsets that the project can be expected to generate. We estimate that the Wild Rose project will sequester 11,478 metric tons of CO₂ over the next 20 years. This total is very close to projected GHG emissions for SCB operations and ICCB meetings over the next 4 years. Therefore, the possibility exists that if estimated GHG emissions are higher than estimated, or if additional Sections or Programs within SCB wish to join our carbon offsetting efforts, then we will need more carbon offsets than the Wild Rose project can provide.

To address this possibility, SCB is releasing this Request for Proposals for new carbon offset project ideas. SCB's first two sponsored carbon offset projects (2007, 2010) were identified by SCB members. The EFC has been responsible for screening the projects for quality and appropriateness, and for establishing necessary contracts and agreements with the project to deliver the carbon offset benefits to SCB. The purpose of this RFP is to generate ideas for carbon offset projects from among the SCB membership, and to outline the basic requirements of the EFC for appropriate carbon offset projects.

Carbon Offset Project Requirements

Carbon offset projects should meet the following principles in order to be sponsored by SCB:

Real

The proposal must provide strong evidence that the project has or will result in GHG emission reductions or removals. SCB carbon offset projects do not necessarily need to follow the formal procedures of carbon market standards for creating tradable carbon offsets, but the rules within these markets are useful guidelines for establishing reliable carbon offset projects. Offset standards such as the Clean Development Mechanism; the Voluntary Carbon Standard; or the Climate, Community, and Biodiversity Alliance are good examples of carbon standards which may be followed. Preference will be given to projects that adhere to accepted practices such as these.

Measurable and Monitored

The proposal should explain how GHG emission reductions and removals will be measured using recognized measurement tools against a credible emissions baseline. The project must be regularly monitored using scientifically appropriate methods to accurately assess GHG reductions or removals.

Permanent

Where GHG emission reductions or removals are generated by projects that carry a risk of reversibility (for example, a project based on restoring a native forest land), adequate safeguards must be in place to ensure that the risk of reversal is minimized over the lifetime of the project (ideally 20-50 years). Also, appropriate monitoring practices must be in place to recognize a future reversal, and the project contract must stipulate any corrective actions that will be taken to compensate a reversal.

Additional

Project-based GHG emission reductions and removals must be “additional” to what would have happened under a business as usual scenario. Can you demonstrate that this project will actually reduce GHG emissions above and beyond what would have happened if the project had not been carried out?

Unique

SCB needs to ensure that there is no double counting, or double claiming of the environmental benefit, in respect of the GHG emission reductions or removals. Therefore, carbon offsets claimed and paid for by SCB must not be entered into other GHG emission reduction markets, and the project proponent will sign an agreement to this effect.

Transparent

Project proponents must agree to appropriate disclosure of GHG-related information and project performance to allow SCB to make decisions with reasonable confidence.

Conservative

Conservative assumptions, values and procedures must be used to ensure that the GHG emission reductions or removals are not over-estimated.

Conservation Benefits

The carbon offset project should have demonstrable positive impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem functionality. Projects that protect, restore, or enhance native ecosystems will be given priority by the EFC. The project's monitoring protocol will ideally include assessments to measure the project's performance toward stated ecological goals.

Scalable

Ideally, the project will be arranged to be scalable relative to the GHG reduction needs of SCB, or the project will be arranged so that SCB can deliver a flexible amount of funding in exchange for a flexible proportion of the project's GHG emissions reductions.

A proposal does not need to be "perfect" with respect to each criterion; the Wild Rose project, for instance, is not scalable. The EFC will actively work with project proponents to offer comments and offer corrections to address any of the above areas.

To Submit a Project Idea

SCB members with ideas for potential carbon offset projects should provide a short project summary. The summary should address each of the above criteria, including background information on why the project is compatible with SCB's mission, and information about the project owners and implementers. Please attempt to estimate the GHG emissions reductions to be achieved over the project's lifetime.

Please submit project summaries and inquiries to
EcoFootprint@conbio.org

Project summaries will be reviewed as they are received.

Thank you!

Stephen Handler
Chair, Ecological Footprint Committee