December 15, 2014

Chairman Mary Nichols, Board Members, and ARB Offsets Staff

Air Resources Board, California Environmental Protection Agency

1001 I Street

Sacramento, CA 95812

Re: Notice of Public Hearing to Consider Amendments to the California Cap on Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Market Based Compliance Mechanisms (CAPANDTRADEPRF14)

U.S. Forest Protocol

Comments submitted electronically at: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/lispub/comm/bcsubform.php?listname=capandtradeprf14&comm_period=A>

Dear Chairman Nichols:

The California Forestry Association (CFA) thanks you for the opportunity to provide comment on proposed changes to the ARB Compliance Offset U.S. Forest Protocol. CFA represents forest landowners, wood products producers, biomass powerplants and professional natural resource managers throughout the State of California.

**Proposed Buffer Width and Buffer Retention Changes in Section 3.1(a)(4)(A and B)**

All Landowners across the U.S., including industrial landowners in California, that practice even-age management would likely be precluded from registering their forest carbon using the ARB Compliance Offsets Protocol (U.S. Forest Projects) if the proposed changes are adopted by ARB.

The proposed change goes well beyond the California Forest Practices Act implementing regulations, which for even-age management call for a 300’ buffer around harvest units that is to be retained from 3-5 years. The Protocol change proposes, for a 20 acre harvest unit, an 800’ buffer to be retained until the plantation has 50 square feet of basal area; about 15-25 years of growth. This would drastically change any even-age managed forest’s sustained yield plan and dramatically lower first and second decade harvest levels.

Experience, for even-aged managed forests, in determining carbon sequestration would likely show that adoption of this proposed buffer width and buffer retention change would **LOWER** sequestered carbon over a 100 year time horizon.

**The Existing ARB Offsets U.S. Forest Protocol and Proposed Changes at Section 3.1(a)(4)(A and B)**

The existing ARB U.S. Forest protocol uses the Climate Action Reserve Forest Management Version 3.2 protocol for its foundation. Version 3.2 evolved over about a 5 year period using a diverse Stakeholder Work Group (shown below) for its development.

**Work Group**

**Name Organization**

Connie Best The Pacific Forest Trust

Dave Bischel California Forestry Association

Louis Blumberg The Nature Conservancy

Steve Brink California Forestry Association

Ann Chan The Pacific Forest Trust

Florence Daviet World Resources Institute

George Gentry California Board of Forestry

Bruce Goines United States Forest Service

Katie Goslee Winrock International

Greg Giusti University of California Extension

Sterling Griffin Scientific Certification Systems

Caryl Hart California State Parks

Eric Holst Environmental Defense Fund

Robert Hrubes Scientific Certification Systems

Nick Martin Winrock International

Ed Murphy Sierra Pacific Industries

Mark Nechodom United States Forest Service

Jeanne Panek California Air Resources Board

Michelle Passero The Nature Conservancy

Tim Pearson Winrock International

Tim Robards California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Emily Russell Roy The Pacific Forest Trust

Bob Rynearson W.M Beaty & Associates

Gary Rynearson Green Diamond Resources

Jayant Sathaye University of California, Berkeley

Kimberly Todd United States Environmental Protection Agency

Doug Wickizer California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

**Technical Support**

Nancy Budge QB Consulting

Jordan Golinkoff The Conservation Fund

The Work Group, in development of CAR Version 3.2, which, in part, led to Section 3.8.1 in the ARB U.S. Forest Protocol, provided assurance that the registrant was using sustainable forest practices:

**“Sustainable Harvesting Practices**

At the time commercial harvesting is either planned or initiated within the Project Area, the Offset Project Operator or Authorized Project Designee must demonstrate that the Forest Owner(s) employs and demonstrates sustainable long-term harvesting practices on all of its forest landholdings, including the Project Area” using one of three options.

Further, while the Work Group provided for the 3rd party certification of sustainability, it also provided a mechanism for the local forestry regulating authority to make a buffer change if environmentally necessary. Hence, the U.S. Forest Protocol is already designed to adapt to changes determined environmentally necessary by the local forestry regulatory agencies (in California, the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection).

To our knowledge, the proposed changes to the U.S. Forest Protocol before the Board Dec. 18, 2014 were not developed under a diverse technical team. Further, CalFire and the Board of Forestry, who have the responsibility for forest practices in the State, had no knowledge nor, to our knowledge, were they even contacted regarding this proposal.

**Conclusion**

CFA do not see any reason that proposed changes to the U.S. Forest Protocol at Section 3.1(a)(4)(A and B) are warranted.

Further, the ARB U.S. Forest Protocol was only adopted three years ago (October 2011). It does not send a positive signal to potential registrants to see such a drastic change as is proposed in Section 3.1(a)(4)(A and B) in such a short time period.

CFA respectfully requests ARB reject the proposed change at Section 3.1(a)(4)(A and B)of the ARB U.S. Forest Protocol.

Sincerely,



STEVEN A. BRINK

Vice President – Public Resources