



August 11, 2015

California Air Resources Board Offset Staff  
Air Resources Board, California Environmental Protection Agency  
1001 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95812

RE: Comments on Workshop on Guidance for the Newly Adopted U.S. Forest Projects Compliance Offset Protocol

Dear ARB Offset Staff,

The American Carbon Registry (ACR), an approved Offset Project Registry (OPR) for the California Cap-and-Trade program, respectfully submits comments herein on the California Air Resources Board's Workshop on Guidance for the Newly Adopted U.S. Forest Projects Compliance Offset Protocol which took place on July 27, 2015.

As an OPR, ACR shares ARB's commitment to offset protocols that reflect the best possible science, ensuring the environmental integrity of California's landmark Cap-and-Trade Program. ACR is also dedicated to the demonstration of a robust offset program as the most efficient means to achieve cost-effective emissions reductions and stimulate emissions reduction actions in non-capped sectors.

The Compliance Offset Protocol for US Forests that was approved by the Board on June 24, 2015 contains language that is unclear. We therefore provide, in this letter, some specific instances and suggestions for improvement, where ACR believes that additional guidance is needed to make the newly adopted language more workable.

We hope that Staff will consider our suggestions. Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments to ARB.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Orrego".

Jessica Orrego  
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## Summary of suggestions for guidance

### 1. Sub-chapter 1.2. Definition 31

Logical Management Unit: It is not clear if LMU is defined as all the land in the assessment area OR by unique attributes (described in definition). Further, it is not clear if a project chooses to define the LMU based on biological attributes (such as forest type), if the forest type must be delimited by watershed boundaries, elevational zones, or unique road networks. ?? Our suggestion would be to allow an LMU to be defined such that it doesn't always have to be delimited by watershed boundaries, elevational zones, or unique road networks. This needs to be as broad and flexible as possible.

### 2. Subchapter 3.1, (a)(4)(C)

*"Within ownership boundaries, no area contiguous to an even-aged harvest unit may be harvested using an even-aged harvest method unless the average of the dominant and codominant trees..."*

Please clarify that this only refers to the area within the project area, as it is unclearly stated as 'within ownership boundaries'. Suggest that it only refers to project area.

*"If these standards are to be met with trees that were present at the time of the harvest, there shall be an interval of not less than five years following the completion of operations before adjacent even-aged management may occur"*

Please clarify what is meant by this sentence. If sufficient trees are left behind after a harvest to meet the 'acceptably stocked' requirements' and also are over 5 years/5 feet it is not clear why the unit would still have to wait 5 years as that contradicts the language in the first part of this section, and also in (D)(2). This could apply to situations where a stand is thinned down to BA above 50sqft, which is surely not the intent. This should be clarified. It is also not clear why existing trees, for example, after an overstory removal can't be counted towards the stocking requirements. This is going to lead to confusion, as tracking each unit's existing trees over time is costly and difficult.

### 3. Subchapter 5.2.1(d)(3)4.

Stratified Vegetation Sampling is an untested analysis, and it appears that the unit heading is incorrect in the far right column in Table 5.2. It should be C, not CO2.

#### **4. Subchapter 8.1(b)(2)(E)8.**

*For statistical analysis, the two samples shall be combined and analyzed together.*

It is unclear what statistical analysis this is referring to, please clarify.

Further, this section does not make it clear that a verifier can opt to use professional judgement to determine if a unit or area is 'acceptably stocked' in lieu of conducting detailed sampling. In addition, guidance on what type of data is acceptable to demonstrate acceptably stocked units would be useful (e.g., GIS data).

#### **5. General comment**

ACR respectfully request that *prior* to future Forest Protocol updates and changes a technical work group is convened to discuss proposed changes, to ensure that sufficient expertise and industry perspective is considered.