



## Comments regarding proposed modifications to Compliance Offset Protocols

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### Introduction

SCS Global Services thanks the California Air Resources Board (ARB) for the ability to comment on the proposed Regulatory Review Update to the Compliance Offset Protocol for U.S. Forest Projects (“Forest Protocol”) and Compliance Offset Protocol for Rice Cultivation Projects (“Rice Protocol”). SCS appreciates the opportunity to suggest improvements to these protocols.

Having verified 75% of the compliance projects under the Forest Protocol and with far-reaching expertise in the verification of offset projects under several standards in the voluntary market, SCS has drafted the following comments for the ARB’s consideration.

## Comments Regarding the Draft Revision to the Compliance Offset Protocol U.S. Forest Projects

The draft revision to the Compliance Offset Protocol U.S. Forest Projects (“the Protocol”) will be known, within this section, as the “draft revision”.

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
1	1.2(21)	“Forest Management” means the commercial or noncommercial growing and harvesting of forests.	Definition too narrow and does not include multiple forest management objectives outside of harvesting.

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
2	1.2(38)	<p>“Professional Forester” means a professional engaged in the science and profession of forestry. For forest projects that occur in a jurisdiction that has professional forester licensing laws and regulations, a professional forester must be credentialed in that jurisdiction. Where a jurisdiction does not have a professional forester law or regulation, then a professional forester is defined as either having the Certified Forester credentials managed by the Society of American Foresters, or other valid professional forester license or credential approved by a government agency in a different jurisdiction.</p> <p>For forest projects that occur on lands held in trust by the United States for a tribe or a tribal member, or on tribally owned fee land, a Professional Forester with credentials managed by the Society of American Foresters, Tribal Forest Manager, Tribal Timber Sale Officer, Tribal or BIA Officer in Charge, or BIA Regional Forester is sufficient.</p>	<p>The professional forestry credentials from a jurisdiction (e.g. a CA Registered Professional Forester) should also be suitable for tribal lands since a SAF CF is allowed.</p> <p>In addition, jurisdictions that have a professional forester licensing law but it is not a requirement to practice forestry the professional forester credential should not be required. For example, in the state of Michigan, you do not need to be a “registered forester” to practice forestry; it is a voluntary registration.</p> <p>It would be helpful for ARB to provide a list of the states which have a professional forester law or regulations so both OPOs and Verification Bodies are aware of the requirements.</p>

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
3	2.1(b)	<p>To be eligible under this protocol, a reforestation project must not:</p> <p>(1) Involve rotational harvesting of reforested trees or any harvesting of pre-existing carbon in live trees during the first 30 years after offset project commencement unless such harvesting is needed to prevent or reduce an imminent threat of disease. Such harvesting may only occur if the Offset Project Operator or Authorized Project Designee provides a written statement from the government agency in charge of forestry regulation in the state where the project is located stipulating that the harvesting is necessary to prevent or mitigate disease; and</p> <p>(2) Undertake tree planting or removal of impediments to natural reforestation if a commercial harvest of healthy live trees has occurred within 10 years or since the occurrence of a significant disturbance, whichever period is shorter.</p>	<p>The term "and" between sub-sections (1) and (2) is confusing, because, as written, it indicates that the draft revision only precludes instances of circumstances (1) and (2) occurring in combination. From review of Section 2.1 of the prevailing Protocol, it appears that the intent is to preclude instances of circumstances (1) or (2). In this case, it is recommended that "and" be replaced with "or".</p> <p>In addition, sub-section (2), which is a re-wording of Section 2.1.1(3) of the prevailing Protocol, is confusing as written. It is suggested that this sub-section be re-written as follows:  "Occur on land within which a commercial harvest a commercial harvest of healthy live trees has occurred within 10 years of offset project commencement or since the occurrence of a significant disturbance, whichever period is shorter."</p>
4	2.1(b)(1)	<p>Involve rotational harvesting of reforested trees...</p>	<p>The term "rotational harvesting" is not defined. It is recommended that this term be defined or replaced with a defined term.</p>

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
5	3.1(a)(1)	Project consists of at least 95% native species based on the sum of carbon in the standing live tree carbon pool.	It is recommended that this language be replaced with "Project consists of at least 95% native species based on the sum of carbon in Standing Live Carbon Stocks" for greater clarity.

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
6	3.1(a)(1)	<p>Native species are identified under the heading “Associated Species” in the Assessment Area Data File associated with this protocol version available on the Forest Offset Protocol Resources section of ARB’s website.</p>	<p>It is recommended that ARB personnel confirm, through careful consultation with outside experts, that this is, in fact, the case for all assessment areas within the geographic scope of the draft revision. It has been SCS' experience, in past verification audits, that the species identified within the heading “Associated Species” in the Assessment Area Data File are exemplary of a specific assessment area, but that the list of species under this heading is not necessarily an exhaustive list of species that are native to any given assessment area. As one example of this, many hardwood species (e.g., blue oak, California black oak, California live oak) that naturally occur within the "Coast Redwood/Douglas-fir Mixed Conifer" assessment area of the "Northern California Coast" supersection are not listed within the heading “Associated Species” for that assessment area.</p>

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
7	3.1(a)(1)	If a state/regional reference is unavailable or inadequate, documentation from a state botanist or other qualified independent resource, recognized as expert by academic, private and government organizations, must be submitted indicating that the project promotes and maintains native forests.	It is unclear what "state/regional" references may be "unavailable or inadequate". This should be clarified.
8	3.1(a)(1)	Assessed at initial and all subsequent verifications from inventory data	It is stated in Table 3.1 that the "Native Species" and "Composition of Native Species" criteria are "Assessed at initial and all subsequent verifications from inventory data." However, it is unclear how this assessment can happen prior to the second site-visit verification for reforestation projects, since inventory data may not be available for reforestation projects prior to the second site-visit verification (as allowed by the Protocol).

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
9	3.1(a)(1)	<p>To the extent seed is available, and/or physical site characteristics permit, reforestation projects that involve planting of seedlings must plant a mixture of species such that no single species' prevalence, measured as the percent of all live tree stems in the project area, exceeds the percentage value shown under the heading 'Species Diversity Index' in the Assessment Area Data File associated with this protocol version available on the Forest Offset Protocol Resources section of ARB's website.</p>	<p>This text is confusing because the phrase "plant a mixture of species such that no single species' prevalence" implies that the only opportunity to impact species composition is during planting of trees. In reality, forest managers have the opportunity to impact species composition (through pre-commercial and commercial thinning and other silvicultural treatments) throughout the lifetime of a given stand. If tree planting is deemed to be the only action that can impact species composition so as to comply with the requirement, it is unclear why the requirement needs to be assessed at "all subsequent verifications". It is suggested that the intent of the requirement is merely that an appropriate level of diversity in species composition be maintained throughout the lifetime of a project. Thus, in order to improve clarity and allow for a range of silvicultural options toward this end, and to increase consistency with the requirement for Improved Forest Management and Avoided Conversion Projects, it is suggested that</p> <p>"To the extent seed is available, and/or physical site characteristics permit, reforestation projects that involve planting of seedlings must plant a mixture of species such that no single species' prevalence, measured as the percent of all live tree stems in the project area, exceeds the percentage value shown under the heading 'Species Diversity Index' in the Assessment Area Data File associated with this protocol version available on the Forest Offset Protocol Resources section of ARB's website."</p> <p>be replaced with</p> <p>"To the extent seed is available, and/or physical site characteristics permit, no single species' prevalence, measured as the percent of all live tree stems in the project area, exceeds the percentage value of standing live tree carbon shown under the heading "Species Diversity Index" in the Assessment Area Data File associated with this protocol version available on the Forest Offset Protocol Resources section of ARB's website."</p>



No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
10	3.1(a)(1)	All forest landholdings within geographic areas eligible under this protocol (the contiguous United States and eligible portions of Alaska identified on the map available from the Forest Offset Protocol Resources section of ARB's website), including the project area, owned or controlled by the forest owner(s) and its affiliates (as defined in subchapter 3.1(a)(2)) are currently under one or a combination of the following...	All language within this row of Table 3.1 is redundant, as it duplicates requirements contained within Section 3.1(a)(2)(C). It is recommended that the redundant text be deleted.
11	3.1(a)(1)	...portions of the project area that have not recently undergone salvage harvesting...	The row under the heading "Structural Elements (Standing and Lying Dead Wood)" within Table 3.1 contains two references to "portions of the project area that have not recently undergone salvage harvesting". It is not completely clear what is meant, in this context, by "recently". The language implies that there are two conditions, the condition of having "not recently undergone salvage harvesting" and the condition of not "undergone salvage harvesting within the previous reporting period". If this is the case, "recently" is implicitly defined as "within the previous reporting period". However, it would be better to have this explicitly clarified. This could be done, if desired, by replacing "portions of the project area that have not recently undergone salvage harvesting" with "portions of the project area that have not undergone salvage harvesting within the previous reporting period".

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
12	3.1(a)(1)	Assessed during initial and all subsequent verifications from inventory data	<p>The row under the heading "Structural Elements (Standing and Lying Dead Wood)" within Table 3.1 indicates that compliance with these requirements are "Assessed during initial and all subsequent verifications from inventory data". However, the row also contains references to determination of whether "the quantity of lying dead wood is commensurate with recruitment from standing dead trees" or, in other words, whether there is evidence "that lying dead wood has been actively removed". Strictly speaking, it will typically not be possible to assess whether "lying dead wood has been actively removed" from inventory data, as inventories of lying dead wood are typically not maintained (nor are they required to be maintained by the Protocol). In practice, a determination of this is typically made during a site visit and during meetings with project personnel. Therefore, it is recommended that "Assessed during initial and all subsequent verifications from inventory data" be changed to "Assessed during initial and all subsequent verifications from inventory data and, where relevant, observations from site visits and other verification activities".</p>

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
13	3.1(a)(1)	...standing dead wood...	The row under the heading "Structural Elements (Standing and Lying Dead Wood)" within Table 3.1 contains numerous references to "standing dead wood", but this term is not defined within the Protocol. It is suggested that "standing dead wood" be replaced with the defined term "Standing Dead Tree Carbon Stocks".
14	3.1(a)(1)	salvage harvesting	The Protocol does not have a definition of the term "salvage harvesting", as applied in the row under the heading "Structural Elements (Standing and Lying Dead Wood)" within Table 3.1. It is recommended that such a definition can be provided. The Dictionary of Forestry ( <a href="http://www.dictionaryofforestry.org/">http://www.dictionaryofforestry.org/</a> ), published by the Society of American Foresters, is one helpful source for this type of definition.

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
15	3.1(a)(4)	<p>(A) Harvest units that have less than 50 square feet of basal area retention must not exceed 40 acres in total area;</p> <p>(B) Open canopy harvest units, harvest units with an area of 3 acres or greater that have less than 50 square feet of basal area retention, must have a buffer area of forest vegetation containing at least 50 square feet of basal area retention must surround the harvest unit. The width of the buffer area must be a minimum of the area of the harvest unit, rounded up to the nearest acre, multiplied by 40; and</p> <p>(C) Cuts on harvest units that occurred prior to the project commencement date are exempt from subchapters 3.1(a)(4)(A) and 3.1(a)(4)(B) provided that no new harvests occur in the previously cut harvest unit or would be buffer area until the harvest unit cut prior to project commencement meets the requirements of subchapter 3.1(a)(4)(A) and 3.1(a)(4)(B);</p>	<p>SCS is concerned that the addition of this new requirement would be a major disincentive for projects outside of CA. Not only is this requirement extremely burdensome and time-intensive to verify, it does not stipulate an end time for the adjacency requirement.</p> <p>Please clarify how clause B of this requirement is to be met should surrounding areas be under a different ownership or be of a non-forest classification type.</p>

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
16	3.1(b)(1)(E)	The decrease in standing live tree carbon stocks occurs after the final crediting period (during the required 100 year monitoring period) and the residual live carbon stocks are maintained at a level that assures all credited standing live tree carbon stocks are permanently maintained;	The criteria by which it should be evaluated whether "the residual live carbon stocks are maintained at a level that assures all credited standing live tree carbon stocks are permanently maintained" are unclear. It is recommended that additional criteria be added to clarify this requirement.

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
17	3.2(d)	This approval must include an explicit approval of the forest project's baseline...	It is unclear what "approval of the forest project's baseline" means. One possible interpretation is that the language means that the government agency must approve the course of action (e.g., the silvicultural regime) modeled to occur in the baseline scenario. However, this does not appear entirely logical, as the baseline scenario is typically thought of as the scenario that does not occur. Another possible interpretation is that a government must sanction the description of the baseline scenario as "a conservative estimate of business-as-usual GHG emission reductions or GHG removal enhancements" (per the definition of "Project Baseline" in Section 95802(298) of the Regulation), or some similar language. It is recommended that the meaning of "approval" be clarified.

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
18	3.4.1(c)	The legal requirement test is satisfied if... (3) Avoided conversion projects must submit official documentation..."	The quoted text is grammatically incorrect. It is recommended that "Avoided conversion projects must submit official documentation" be replaced with "Avoided conversion projects submit official documentation"
19	3.4.2(b)(3)(A)(7)	Projects with multiple parcels within a project area must meet the requirement that the alternative land use each parcel has at least a 40 percent greater value than the current forested land use.	It is recommended that "the alternative land use each parcel" be replaced with "the alternative land use for each parcel". Also, it is recommended that "parcel" be defined, given its importance to this language.

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
20	3.4.2(b)(3)(A)(7)	The Offset Project Operator or Authorized Project Designee must sum the individual appraised values for each parcel within the project area when calculating the ACD.	The language is somewhat confusing. It is correct if the appraised values for each parcel are first calculated on a total basis (i.e., equal to the appraised value of each parcel, on a per-acre basis, multiplied by the area of that parcel). However, if the appraised values for each parcel are first calculated on a per-acre basis (as they often are in real-estate appraisals), application of this language will result in failure to properly weight values by parcel area. It is recommended that "sum the individual appraised values for each parcel within the project area" be replaced with either "take the weighted average (weighted by area of each parcel within the project area) of the individual appraised values for each parcel".



No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
21	4.1(b), 4.2(b), 4.3(b)	Mechanical site preparation activities are not conducted on contours.	The time scale over which this criterion (stated regarding SSRs RF-6, IFM-6 and AC-6) must be evaluated is unclear. For example, it is not clear whether site preparation activities prior to the project commencement date are considered within the scope of the evaluation.

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
22	5(c), 3.5.2(c)	...for reporting period y...	<p>The temporal scopes of the variables <math>\Delta A_{\text{Consite}}</math> and <math>\Delta B_{\text{Consite}}</math> have been defined as "since the last reporting period". This is a helpful improvement in clarity over the previous version of the Protocol. However, this is not entirely consistent with the definitions of the variables <math>A_{\text{Consite},y}</math>, <math>A_{\text{Consite},y-1}</math>, <math>CD_y</math>, <math>CD_{y-1}</math>, <math>B_{\text{Consite},y}</math>, and <math>B_{\text{Consite},y-1}</math>, which indicate that the respect variables are quantified "for reporting period y" or "for reporting period y-1". This raises the question: for which time in the reporting period should these variables should be quantified? For greater clarity, it is recommended that all instances of "for reporting period y" be replaced with "at the end of reporting period y" and all instances of "for reporting period y-1" be replaced with "at the end of reporting period y-1", which is consistent with the definitions of the variables <math>\Delta A_{\text{Consite}}</math> and <math>\Delta B_{\text{Consite}}</math>.</p> <p>It is recommended that corresponding changes be made to Equation 3.1 in Section 3.5.2(c).</p>

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
23	5.1.1(b)	For carbon pools that will be affected by site preparation...	<p>The Protocol does not have a definition of the term "site preparation", as applied in the quoted text. It is recommended that such a definition can be provided. (SCS has experienced one situation where lack of such a definition caused a challenge in interpretation of a similarly worded clause in the Climate Action Reserve's Forest Offset Protocol Version 3.2.) The Dictionary of Forestry (<a href="http://www.dictionaryofforestry.org/">http://www.dictionaryofforestry.org/</a>), published by the Society of American Foresters, is one helpful source for this type of definition.</p> <p>In addition, it is suggested that additional criteria be added for determination of whether a given pool has been "affected by site preparation". For example, some popular herbicide treatments work to control shrub and herbaceous species by limiting their ability to germinate and establish on the site, but does not necessarily actively kill established plants. It is unclear whether or not use of such an herbicide would be deemed to "affect" SSR RF-2 (Shrubs and herbaceous understory carbon).</p>

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
24	5.1.1(d)(1)(A), 5.2.2(e), 5.3.1(d)	<p>The baseline for a forest project under this version of the protocol is valid for the duration of the project life following a successful initial verification where the offset project receives a positive verification statement.</p> <p>(1) If correctable errors to the baseline are detected in subsequent verifications, the baseline must be adjusted prior to a verification statement being issued. The corrected baseline would then supersede the originally verified baseline for the purpose of determining GHG emission reductions and GHG removal enhancements going forward.</p> <p>(A) Previously issues ARB offset credits will be subject to the invalidation provisions in section 95985 of the Regulation.</p> <p>(B) In no case will additional ARB offset credit be issued.</p>	<p>It is recommended that "Previously issues ARB offset credits" be replaced with "Previously issued ARB offset credits".</p> <p>It is suggested that additional criteria added for determination of what constitutes a "correctable error".</p> <p>It is recommended that "going forward" be replaced with more precise language (e.g., "for the reporting period for which the offset verification services are being conducted and all subsequent reporting periods").</p> <p>It is unclear exactly what is meant by the statement "In no case will additional ARB offset credit be issued". This statement could mean that in no case will additional ARB offset credits be issued for prior reporting periods (for which credits have already been issued). It could also mean that in no case will ARB offset credits be issued, throughout the project crediting period) that are in excess of those that would have been issued with the prior (erroneous) baseline in place. It could also mean that both of the previous conditions is true. It is suggested that clarification be provided.</p>

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
25	5.1.2(a), 5.1.4(a), 5.3.2(a), 5.3.4(a)	[all language]	These sections do not appear to have a purpose, since they are not used in the calculation of secondary effects; these sections appear to conflict with guidance in Appendix C (which requires calculation on the basis of the harvested bole only) and are recommended for deletion.
26	5.1.2(a), 5.1.4, 5.2.3(a)(2), 5.2.5(a), 5.3.2(a)(2), 5.3.4(a)	...determine the actual amount of carbon in standing live and standing dead trees (whole tree including belowground biomass and bark)...	For greater clarity, it is recommended that this language be linked to the well-written definitions already included in the Protocol. Thus, it is suggested that "amount of carbon in standing live and standing dead trees (whole tree including belowground biomass and bark)" be replaced with "Standing Live Tree Carbon Stocks and Standing Dead Tree Carbon Stocks".

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
27	5.1.3, 5.2.4, 5.3.3, 6(f)	<p>(a) Incorporate any new forest inventory data obtained during the previous reporting period into the inventory estimate. Any plots sampled during the previous reporting period must be incorporated into the inventory estimate;</p> <p>(b) Use an approved model to “grow” (project forward) prior-year data from existing forest inventory plots to the current reporting year, per the requirements of appendix B;</p> <p>(c) Update the forest inventory estimate for harvests and/or disturbances that have occurred during the previous reporting period; and</p> <p>(d) Apply an appropriate confidence deduction for the inventory based on its statistical uncertainty, following the requirements and methods in appendix A.</p>	<p>It is recommended that, for greater clarity, elegance and consistency with Section 5(c), the following changes be made:</p> <p>Replace "during the previous reporting period" with "during the reporting period"</p> <p>Replace "to the current reporting year" with "to the end of the reporting period"</p> <p>Replace "during the previous reporting period" with "during the reporting period"</p> <p>It is recommended that corresponding changes be made to Section 6(f).</p>

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
28	5.2.3(a), 5.2.5(a), 5.2.6, 5.3.2(a), 5.3.5(a), 5.2.6	...AChv,n for use in equations 5.10, C.8, and C.17)... BChv,n for use in equations 5.10, C.8, and C.17)...	The references to Equations C.8 and C.17 in these sections are incorrect (and recommended for deletion), since the end result of sections 5.2.3(a), 5.2.5(a), 5.3.2(a), and 5.3.5(a) is the calculation of secondary effects (not the calculations of Appendix C). It is understood that the confusion is caused, in part, by the use of the variable names AChv,n and BChv,n for both the calculation of secondary effects and the calculations of Appendix C (it is recommended that this confusion be minimized by using different variable names for the two processes).
29	7.1.1(13)	If the forest project is located on public land, describe the approval process and public vetting processes necessary to evaluate management and policy decisions concerning the offset project that has or will take place in order to obtain approval of the offset project's management activities and baseline	This requirement should be applicable only when the public land baseline procedure in Section 5.2.2 is applicable (per Section 5.2). It is recommended that "on public land" be replaced with "on land that was publicly owned prior to the offset project commencement date".

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
30	N/A	[No specific language]	<p>The draft revision contains instances, throughout, where definitions of terms defined in Section 1.2(a) are either repeated or paraphrased elsewhere within the draft revision. It is recommended that this be avoided, as it results in the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In some cases, the potential for a more cluttered and confusing text (e.g., it is stated in Section 3.1(a)(4)(B) that "Open canopy harvest units, harvest units with an area of 3 acres or greater that have less than 50 square feet of basal area retention, must have a buffer area of forest vegetation containing at least 50 square feet of basal area retention must surround the harvest unit"; the definition of "open canopy harvest unit" has been repeated within the text in such a manner that it is not clear whether "harvest units with an area of 3 acres or greater that have less than 50 square feet of basal area retention" are different from, or the same as, "open canopy harvest units")</li> <li>2. In some cases, the potential for slightly different definitions to be applied, leading to a potential for internal inconsistency (e.g., "Significant Disturbance" appears to be paraphrased within Section 2.1(a)(2) as an event that "resulted in a loss of at least 20 percent of the land's above-ground standing live tree biomass"; this is not entirely consistent with the full definition of this term, but is sufficiently similar to make it unclear whether the two descriptions of "Significant Disturbance" are contradictory)</li> </ol> <p>In summary, it is recommended that all descriptions of defined terms be restricted to Section 1.2(a), unless a compelling reason exists to the contrary for a specific instance.</p>



No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
31	N/A	[No specific language]	<p>In many cases, the draft revision has adopted the convention (as also adopted in the Cap-and-Trade Regulation) of capitalizing defined terms. SCS supports this convention, as it facilitates use of the Protocol. However, this convention has not been adopted with complete consistency, as shown in the following examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Reforestation Project" is not capitalized in Section 2.1</li> <li>2. "Significant Disturbance" is not capitalized in Section 2.1(a)(2)</li> <li>3. "Open canopy harvest unit" is not capitalized in Section 3.1(a)(4)(B)</li> <li>4. "Basal Area" and "Basal Area Retention" are not capitalized in Section 3.1(a)(4)(B)</li> </ol> <p>For maximum clarity, it is recommended that capitalization be employed in all instances of usage of defined terms.</p>
32	N/A	[No specific language]	<p>The terms "above-ground standing live tree carbon stocks" and "above-ground standing live tree biomass" are used several times within the draft revision, but are not defined within Section 1.2(a).</p>

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
			<p>"Above-Ground Live Biomass" is defined within Section 1.2(a) but used only once, in Section 7.1.2(a)(1). "Below-ground standing live tree carbon stocks" is not defined within Section 1.2(a). The following actions are suggested:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide a definition for "above-ground standing live tree carbon stocks" and "below-ground standing live tree carbon stocks" within Section 1.2(a).</li> <li>2. Replace "above-ground standing live tree biomass" with "above-ground standing live tree carbon stocks" ("above-ground standing live tree biomass" is only used in the context of the definition of a significant disturbance as a "natural impact that results in a loss of at least 20 percent of the above-ground standing live tree biomass", and, as calculated using the approach mandated by the Protocol, 20 percent of the above-ground standing live tree carbon stocks is, by definition, equivalent to 20 percent of the above-ground standing live tree biomass, so the inclusion of the two separate terms is redundant).</li> <li>3. Replace "Above-Ground Live Biomass" with "above-ground standing live tree carbon stocks" for consistency with the definition of "Significant Disturbance" (as in action #2 above). (Biomass in shrub cover is generally not quantifiable and generally not of interest with respect to the definition of a "Significant Disturbance". Any loss in biomass in shrub cover is likely to be transient in any case, as shrubs are, generally speaking, likely to re-occupy a site within a few years of a disturbance.)</li> <li>4. Remove the definition of "Above-Ground Live Biomass" from Section 1.2(a).</li> </ol>

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
33	N/A	[No specific language]	<p>The draft revision contains the following instances of temporal references to offset verification services:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "May have boundaries that are not finalized until the second full verification. The boundary that is set at the second site visit verification shall be the Project Area boundary for the duration of the project, provided that:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) All lands included in the project area were initially included in the project area during listing; and</li> <li>(B) The project has elected to defer its initial inventory until the second full verification" (Section 2.1(c)(2))</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. "Must be finalized by the conclusion of the initial verification" (Sections 2.2(b)(1) and 2.3(b)(1))</li> </ol> <p>SCS suggests the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Verification" does not occur at a single moment in time. Rather, offset verification services occur over a period of, generally, at least several months. Therefore, it would be more precise, where it is desired to refer to "verification" in this manner, to clarify what point in the verification process is being referred to (as is done in instance #2 above).</li> <li>2. As the review process for a given OPDR does not end with completion of offset verification services, but also involves review by the applicable OPR and by ARB, it is suggested that the above references to "verification" be replaced with the corresponding action by ARB (e.g., issuance of ARB offset credits). Otherwise, it is possible that a change to the project boundary, as required by ARB or the OPR, may not be possible because it would occur after conclusion of offset verification services.</li> </ol>

No.	Section(s)	Language	Comment
34	throughout		It is recommended that the parameters BChv,n and AChv,n be renamed BChv,y and AChv,y, respectively, for greater consistency with the sybmbology used elsewhere in the Protocol.

### Comments Regarding the Draft Revision to the Compliance Offset Protocol Rice Cultivation Projects

No	Sections(s)	Language	Comment
1	Compliance Offset Protocol Rice Cultivation Projects, 2.2(c)		This clause states that no more than 10% of a participating field's perimeter may be shared with another field that also employs early drainage, however it is not clear how that may be verified if the adjoining field is not participating in the project. Please provide additional guidance on ARB's expectations for verification of this eligibility criterion.
2	Compliance Offset Protocol Rice Cultivation Projects, 2.2(d)		Section 2.2(d) is confusing as written. Please provide clarity on what the eligibility requirement is. Additionally, verification guidance on how to assess whether or not the standing water was apparent at the beginning of drainage is requested.

3	Compliance Offset Protocol Rice Cultivation Projects, Appendix B: Staff Report, Pg. 20		The first paragraph on page 10 indicates that a single verification can occur for multiple projects covered in one (1) OPDR. Please clarify if each project will require its own verification report or if one report per OPDR will suffice.
4	Compliance Offset Protocol Rice Cultivation Projects, 8.1(f)-(g); Title 17, California Code of Regulations, Article 5, Subchapter 13; Section 95978(d)-(e)		In the proposed Rice Cultivation Protocol, section 8(f) requires that each verification team must include either an agronomist or a local/state agricultural cooperative rice farming advisor. In what capacity will the expert be allowed to serve on the audit team? Will they be allowed to conduct field visits? In section 95978(e) of the Regulation adopted in July 2014, it defines “Direct supervision” of a technical expert as “daily, on-site close contact with an ARB-accredited verifier acting as a supervisor who is able to respond to the needs of the technical expert. The supervisor must be physically present, or within 4 hours travel time and available to respond to the needs of the technical expert”. If an ARB-accredited verifier must be on-site or within 4 hours of the expert, then having them conduct field visits is a moot point as this will also increase verification costs as it increases the total assessment time we will need to spend on the verification.
5	Compliance Offset Protocol Rice Cultivation Projects, 8.1(i)		Clarification is requested on when the <i>Notice of Verification Services &amp; Conflict of Interest</i> forms can be submitted if the OPO/APD contract with the VB before the end of a reporting period. Additionally, if a verifier is allowed to witness project activities, they are very likely to conduct the initial phase of the risk assessment, develop a sampling plan as well as an audit plan. Please elaborate on what the audit team is allowed to do before the OPDR is submitted.

6	Compliance Offset Protocol Rice Cultivation Projects, 8.1(i)		OPDR is incorrectly referenced as OPRD in this section.
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