



## Forest Service Tracks Carbon Emissions

John Driscoll, The Times-Standard

California's largest public landowner will begin keeping track of carbon emissions from its vehicles and other operations, becoming the first federal agency to participate in such a program.

The U.S. Forest Service's Region 5 will track its emissions in an effort to reduce them over time. Forest Service spokesman Matt Mathes said joining the California Climate Registry is a step toward potentially considering how forest management and wildfires affect the agency's carbon footprint.

The agency has 3,500 highway-legal vehicles and some 7,600 facilities in California, and has begun to replace some of those with more fuel-efficient, less-polluting hybrid vehicles.

"We know what we do has an effect on the environment," Mathes said.

The Six Rivers National Forest has 150 vehicles and about 85 main buildings on four ranger districts that would fit into the registry. Along with the other 17 national forests in California, Six Rivers will begin to track its emissions.

"Where we're at right now is trying to set the baseline," said Six Rivers spokeswoman Julie Ranieri.

The Forest Service is not currently exploring the concept of carbon credits or how logging, fire prevention projects or wildfires reduce or contribute to carbon production and global warming, Mathes said.

Trees store carbon until they rot or burn, and some private landowners in the state have agreed to manage their lands to store more carbon, then sell carbon credits to offset an individual's or company's carbon emissions. California politicians Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and U.S. Sen. Nancy Pelosi are among those who have bought carbon credits to make up for pollution generated on trips.

Mathes said that the Forest Service is not reluctant to participate in that kind of program, but is rather proceeding carefully instead. Tracking emission is just the first move, he said.

Laurie Wayburn, executive director of the Pacific Forest Trust, which works with private landowners to market carbon credits earned through management stricter than state forest rules, said it's good news to hear the Forest Service has joined the registry.

It makes sense that the agency is focused on vehicle pollution and pollution from its facilities, she said, and not on land management, since the Forest Service is not subject to state forest practice rules.

The discussion about public land agencies role in balancing a federal carbon emissions account -- should one eventually be developed -- has begun, Wayburn said. The conversation begs a particularly interesting question, she said.

The Forest Service has managed lands for timber, for fire, for endangered species and for recreation over its long history. There may soon be a new priority.

"How do they best manage their lands in the face of climate change?" Wayburn said.