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‘Carbon-Offset’ Forest Registers Its Biggest Sale Yet

By Jim Downing

The Humboldt County forest that has been one of the country's highest-profile sources of "carbon offsets" has logged its largest sale ever, a deal the forest's managers say demonstrates the market's confidence in the value of their product.

Natsource Asset Management LLC, a New York firm that deals in credits for greenhouse gas emissions reductions and renewable energy development, purchased 60,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions reductions from the Van Eck Forest for an undisclosed price. The deal was the forest's biggest sale by a factor of 10.

Emissions reductions from such projects typically sell for about \$15 a ton. The revenue helps cover the cost of managing the forest so that it soaks up carbon from the atmosphere.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez all have purchased carbon offsets from the Van Eck Forest,

which is managed by the Pacific Forest Trust, a San Francisco nonprofit group.

The deal is the first completed under regulations adopted by the California Air Resources Board in October. The development of a domestic market for carbon offsets has been hampered by a lack of standards that has, in some cases, led to the sale of carbon credits of questionable value.

The air board's rules are meant to standardize procedures for measuring the amount of carbon stored by a forest, so that the offsets generated will hold their value in national and international markets.

"We are hoping that deals like this will provide policymakers around the world with the confidence they need to ensure that forestry becomes part of the solution to address climate change," said Laurie Wayburn, president of Pacific Forest Trust.