

The Pacific Forest Trust
Working Forests, Winning Climate

Program Overview

Forests comprise one third of the United States and play an invaluable role as “carbon sinks,” which cool the climate by safely absorbing and storing the greenhouse gas emissions that trap heat in the atmosphere. However, nearly two-thirds of U.S. forests are privately owned and threatened by degradation, development or conversion to land uses that would actually create emissions, rather than contain them.

Forest loss and degradation accounts for one fifth of the world's greenhouse gas pollution, and is the second largest source of global carbon emissions after the burning of fossil fuels. It is estimated that 40 percent of the excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has come from global deforestation since the Industrial Age.

U.S. forest loss and degradation has significantly contributed to this trend, which is fueled by market forces as landowners deplete and convert their forests for economic reasons. Recognizing this critical threat, since its founding the Pacific Forest Trust (PFT) has worked to ensure that the conservation and stewardship of forests is recognized as an essential part of any comprehensive approach to fighting global warming.

Since 1993, PFT has led initiatives to preserve America’s forest infrastructure through conservation of working landscapes and the development of markets for ecosystem services from forests, such as climate stabilization. Through the “*Working Forests, Winning Climate*” campaign, PFT has been instrumental in creating the policy and market frameworks to expand the conservation and carbon stewardship of U.S. forests to help solve our climate crisis. Concurrently, PFT has demonstrated the feasibility of these policies by developing successful pilot emissions reduction projects, including the first to be verified under the California’s rigorous rules, called the *Van Eck Forest Project*, located in Humboldt, CA.

Due in large part to PFT’s leadership, California’s regulatory program is the first in the United States to broadly recognize the climate benefits of working forests. Under the direction of legislation written by PFT, the California Climate Action Registry (CCAR), California Energy Commission and state Resources Agency worked with PFT to produce the first detailed accounting methodology for measuring and verifying forest carbon emissions reductions generated by improved forest management, reforestation and avoided conversion.

PFT led the multi-stakeholder process that developed this accounting mechanism for ensuring emissions reductions are real, verifiable, permanent and additional to what would be achieved otherwise. These Forest Protocols were later adopted by California’s Air Resources Board (ARB)

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as its first early action in fulfillment of the landmark Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32), promoting forest conservation and stewardship as a means of meeting the state's ambitious greenhouse gas reduction goals.

The *Van Eck Forest Project* became the first carbon emissions reduction project to be registered in accordance with the Forest Protocols, and has since demonstrated how landowners can generate real financial returns by stewarding their forests for climate benefits. Emissions reductions from the project have been sold to prominent local, state and national officials, as well as respected international carbon investment management firms, U.S. businesses and retail-level offset providers. The project is being widely studied and emulated, as large and small forestland owners, as well as Timber Management Investment Groups, develop their own carbon projects under the Forest Protocols.

As California has developed its plan to achieve its climate goals under AB 32, PFT has worked closely with the ARB and stakeholders to ensure that the contributions of forests as a sector are recognized in a comprehensive way. The state has adopted PFT's framework that calls for measuring and monitoring forest carbon stocks and changes, mitigating losses, and marketing gains.

At the same time, PFT has directly influenced policies across the country, within the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative region including the mid-Atlantic states, Washington State, the Western Climate Initiative, the Southeast region and at the federal level. In May 2008, Wayburn testified about the role of forests in achieving U.S. climate goals in the first Congressional hearing ever on the subject. She also has worked with Al Gore and his Alliance for Climate Protection and the "Green Group" coalition of leading national environmental groups, to promote national climate policy goals compatible with international climate processes.

Currently PFT is calling on state and federal policymakers to mandate "No Net Loss" of forests and their climate benefits in legislation that would regulate greenhouse gas emissions. For U.S. forests to be leveraged for significant and lasting climate benefits, PFT recommends a federal strategy to:

- *Monitor* America's forest carbon stores, applying standardized methods of accounting for carbon gains and losses on a life-cycle basis for forests and forest products, including biomass energy;
- *Maintain* America's forest carbon stores by requiring no net loss of forestlands, with greater incentives for forest conservation and assurances that losses of forest carbon stocks are assessed and mitigated; and
- *Market* net durable gains from forest carbon sequestration in order to provide landowners with incentives for good forest and climate stewardship.

Recent accolades for PFT's climate advocacy included the prestigious U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 2009 Climate Protection Award for teamwork, the 2008 Irvine Foundation Leadership Award and the 2008 Land Trust Alliance's Kingsbury Browne Conservation Leadership Award.

Learn more about the Pacific Forest Trust at <http://www.PacificForest.org>.