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Carbon offset protocols released by Avoided Deforestation Partners to protect world's forests

New methods save millions and shave years off approval process to unleash private investment in forest conservation.

March 15, 2011, WASHINGTON, DC - New protocols for avoided deforestation projects promise to change the way forest carbon projects are developed and attract millions in new investment, according to Avoided Deforestation Partners, a non-profit organization dedicated to conserving forests, which coordinated their development. The new methodologies for reduced emission from deforestation and degradation (REDD) remove major barriers for government, NGO and private investment groups to finance forest conservation through carbon markets.

Leading researchers and practitioners in the carbon accounting and methodology field developed the "open source" REDD methodologies - essentially blueprints to identify and design projects that prevent clearing or degrading forests and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The methodologies are unique in two respects: anyone can construct "add-ons" to expand their scope given their modular construction; and they were funded purely as a service to save time and money for project developers- removing major hurdles since methodology approval may last years and cost more than USD 100,000. AD Partners, and its collaborators, see these modules as a way to catalyze new projects in threatened forests around the world.

"Forests around the world are being slashed and burned at the rate of one acre per second," says Jeffrey Horowitz, founder of Avoided Deforestation Partners. "These modules offer a system for those who cannot afford the cost of developing tailor-made carbon accounting protocols for their forest protection projects. In addition to eliminating such costs, project developers can hit the ground running."

Burning and clearing of forests worldwide contributes about 15 percent of GHG emissions, more than the entire transportation sector, and forest protection projects represent one of the most affordable ways to reverse this trend. The new methodologies allow project developers and auditors to accurately account for emission reductions generated by protecting forests, an essential step to secure funding for forest conservation from investors and governments to cut GHG pollution.

Project developers in the developing world are already starting to put them into practice. "We now have the tools to prepare our projects to the highest standards, and get carbon funds to protect the forests of Uganda and the whole continent," says Bill Farmer, Chairman of the Uganda Carbon Bureau.

Avoided Deforestation Partners received financial support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, the Packard Foundation, and others.

Emerging carbon markets in California and elsewhere are expected to generate significant financing for forests by allowing carbon emitters to meet some of their emissions obligations through forest protection and restoration - but only through projects that can prove their efforts are generating measurable reductions in emissions.

"PG&E applauds the development of the AD Partners forest conservation protection modules as another way of ensuring that our anticipated future investments in forest-carbon projects will generate offset credits that are real, measurable, verifiable and permanent, so that we can tackle climate change in a way that is cost-effective for our customers," said Peter Darbee, CEO, President and Chairman of PG&E Corporation.

Large-scale private investment in forest conservation has been widely recognized as one of the most promising vehicles for saving forests. Saving forests means saving forest communities, and irreplaceable plant and animal species.

"Avoided Deforestation Partners' methodologies mean that projects aimed at halting deforestation will have more funds to invest in protecting endangered wildlife and improving the lives of forest-dependent people," said Dr. Jane Goodall, DBE, founder of the Jane Goodall Institute and a UN Messenger for Peace.

The REDD Methodology Modules have been under development for two and a half years. The final methodologies were vetted and approved by the Verified Carbon Standard, including reviews by two independent auditors, to ensure they were scientifically robust and guarantee environmental integrity. Each aspect of the forest-carbon project methodologies are treated as a discrete and independent component such as estimating carbon stocks, deforestation rates, and displacement or leakage of emissions. Individual modules that are applicable to a specific project's circumstances can be selected and applied under a framework module that forms a project-specific methodology.

This effort was coordinated by internationally-recognized climate policy experts Dr. Charlotte Streck and Robert O'Sullivan of Climate Focus. The technical drafting team was led by Dr. Tim Pearson of Winrock International with his colleague Dr. Sandra Brown (who shared in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2007 Nobel Peace Prize). The team included Dr. Lucio Pedroni of Costa Rica's Carbon Decisions International, Dr. Igino Emmer of The Netherlands' Silvestrum, and David Shoch of the United States' TerraCarbon.

For more information, please visit AD Partners website. The methodologies are available through the Voluntary Carbon Standard Association website.

CONTACT: Robert O'Sullivan, Project Director for AD Partners REDD Methodology Modules.

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