

Guidance Document for the Use of Avoided Deforestation Partners VCS REDD Modular Methodology

Frequently Asked Questions

- **The requirement of 90% forest/non-forest accuracy for land-use classification maps may make implementation difficult or impossible in complex landscapes with high rates of deforestation. How can this be addressed?**

Certain landscapes can be extremely difficult for mapping land cover with high accuracies (e.g. 90%+), although several issues are important in determining how to proceed. The first is the distinction between land cover and land use, and mapping land use is notoriously more difficult than mapping land cover. It must be determined if a given land is not classified as forest because of the land use system or because of its physical characteristics (canopy closure and height) do not meet the definition of forest. Remote sensing can only give information on the biophysical characteristics; land use information must be inferred. Assuming reasonable classification algorithms are being used, it is important to note that lower accuracies may be a function of the type of remote sensing data being used, since effectiveness for mapping land cover will depend on the spatial and spectral characteristics of the imagery relative to the land cover characteristics.

Secondly, the achievable accuracies with remote sensing are dependent on the class definition of forest and land use systems. For example, if the definition of forest is 15% canopy closure, then ability to map forest versus non- forest in, e.g. open woodlands will be more difficult.

In certain cases, especially in landscapes that have either sparse open forests or degraded/heterogeneous land cover (e.g. areas of shifting cultivation), it may make sense to reduce the accuracy requirements. There are tradeoffs between accuracy requirements and usability/ease of methodologies for project implementation, and the concept of using deductions based on an accuracy threshold may be the best compromise. It may be possible to design statistically rigorous criteria for deductions based on carbon stocks on the landscape and remote sensing accuracies (both errors of omissions and commission) through error propagation.

Given the chance again we would choose an 80% or 85% requirement. This would require a methodology revision.

- **There seems to be no reference point within any of the modules to determine how many sample plots are needed to establish a baseline, followed by a monitoring data set. Are there available guidelines for this? Can plots measured in proxy areas be used in the development of baseline carbon stocks in the aboveground biomass pool?**

The CDM tool “Calculation of the number of sample plots for measurements within A/R CDM project activities” could be used, as could the Winrock tool available at: http://www.winrock.org/Ecosystems/files/Winrock_Sampling_Calculator.xls. Ultimately, it doesn’t matter which specific tool is used as these are just guides. Rather, one needs to meet the precision requirements for carbon stocks as calculated in X-UNC.

With regard to plot location, plots are required in the project area, but not all the plots need be. For those outside the project area, it doesn’t matter where they are located as long as it can be demonstrated that the areas are in the same strata and that each stratum is consistent geographically. The strata can be more broadly defined by plots in a wider region. This was specifically designed to allow projects to take advantage of plots already set up in the same strata but outside the project area.

- **What constitutes "a valid and verifiable land use management plan for deforesting the project area"? (with respect to BL-PL, section 1.2)**

Ultimately, it is up to the verifiers to act as the final arbiter on how this phrase is interpreted. Generally though, valid means something that is bona fide, legitimate and going to be implemented – i.e. something that is not artificial or created just for the carbon project without any intent of implementation. Verifiable means something that a third party (the verifier) can check to be the case. A land use management plan will likely be something that is more than a map showing current usage; it will likely need to include some sort of plan or indication of use going forward.

- **In the case of planned deforestation for livestock grazing, can enteric methane emissions be accounted for?**

The methodology does not allow accounting for methane from enteric emissions or manure. Even if allowed for though, to get credit for these emissions one would have to prove that the deforestation would lead to a net increase in cattle – i.e. not just be cattle that are moved from another area to this area, but rather cattle who are only born because of the project.

- **When calculating leakage from unplanned deforestation (e.g. using BL-UP and LK-ASP), is it necessary to define a leakage belt? If so, is it absolutely necessary to meet the requirement that the minimum leakage belt area be equal to at least 90% of the area of the project?**

A belt should be defined, as a situation in which one is not needed is highly improbable. The belt may be limited by the area available. One would project baseline deforestation in the belt and then in a project case with no displacement one would just see this projection and the project would have zero leakage. With regard to the belt area, reference the table on page 9 of the BLUP. The area of the belt can be reduced to just the available area of forest near the project if there is insufficient area. And in fact it may be even less than the area of forest available because it can only include areas with somewhat similar landscape, transport factors etc.

- **Is the REDD-MF applicable to 'sustainable timber harvesting' in both baseline and project scenarios?**

This version of the module does not allow harvesting. The methodology was not designed to include these, although it is likely that at a minimum, there would have to be a demonstration of sustainability. There is currently a revision to the methodology which would account for timber harvesting in the with-project scenario. It is likely conservative to not account baseline harvesting as it would be an additional emission and if deforested the full emission would be accounted both with and without logging.

- **Page 6 of the framework states, "If land is not being converted to an alternative use but will be allowed to naturally regrow (i.e. temporally unstocked), this framework shall not be used." Should areas of temporary regrowth that are continuously deforested, for example areas used in swidden agriculture (slash and burn) cycles, be considered in the total deforestation in a given year or period?**

It depends on what the period of time is and the amount of evidence that can be provided on common practice. Clearly slash and burn cycles are considered as deforestation – even though the forest naturally regrows it is never forest, but merely a part of the agricultural cycle – so it depends on how long the abandonment is for. If land is abandoned and there is reason to believe that it could remain untouched essentially indefinitely then the methodology could not be used. If common practice shows a 15 year abandonment or something similar, then it could be.

- **Why is it necessary that gross deforestation be measured rather than net deforestation?**

This is so that if there are large areas of afforestation, they do not decrease the deforestation rate. The focus is on the atmosphere, and afforestation does not mean that deforestation emissions are not happening. This is likely to a project's advantage.

- **High-resolution remote sensing data (<5x5 m pixels) and direct field observation for ground truthing medium resolution data can be expensive. Why is it necessary to use this data from the starting point of the project if the project area will be monitored throughout the project life?**

Ground truthing is an important aspect of any remote sensing work. The methodology developers do not see this as having to be very onerous. Indeed normal project operations, such as collection of carbon stock data, project management and forest protection activities will include visiting areas of forest which will certainly count as direct field observation. The intent here is certainly not full coverage, but instead a small sample for the purpose of ground truthing. This can and often will be on the ground but could also be aerial photographs or high resolution imagery that coincidentally exists.