UBC EOAS Climate
Emergency Commitee

Carbon Offset Short Guide

A short guide navigating the carbon offset field and recommending future project investments

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www.eoas.ubc.ca/climate-crisis/eoas-climateemergency-response

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Background of Carbon Offsets

Past Controversy

The option to offset emissions enables emitters to partly or completely ignore their moral duty to decrease their emissions. In the past, carbon projects have been known to disproportionately harm marginalized communities without engaging in consultation processes or long-term community investment plans

Most carbon offset projects do not undo emissions. Although the main purpose of carbon offsets is to compensate for the release of GHG emissions through carbon storage and/or distribution projects, projects are used to greenwash and display a "sustainable and environmentally-conscious" marketing image. This dependence allows large institutions and corporations to take advantage of carbon distributive projects, delaying the transition to renewable energy. Using offsets in this way is unsustainable as climate mitigation demands reducing global emissions to zero and offsets alone CANNOT get us to net zero emissions.

What are Carbon Offsets?

The climate emergency persists as both greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and global temperatures continue to rise. Carbon offsets exist as a tool to manage the impacts of climate change. Offsets either remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, increase carbon storage, or avoid emissions that would have otherwise taken place

The purpose of this work is to identify appropriate carbon offset projects for UBC researchers to invest in to offset research/business-related travel. Recently the NSERC tri-agency announced that grant funds can be used towards purchasing travel offsets. Generally, identifying "good" carbon offsets investments can be difficult and require a lot of time to navigate. The purpose of this guide is to walk through the evaluation process and provide general recommendations as well as a list of top- rated carbon offset investments established through this evaluation tool

Offset Evaluation

Through this evaluation standard, each offset will be evaluated based on justice, authenticity and environmental factors.

Authenticity Category:

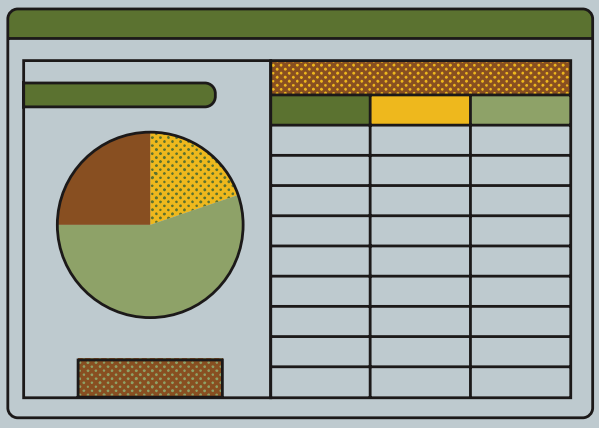
Ranked by evaluating the additionality, proper quantification, leakage, permanence and unique ownership of different standards.

- Tier One: Fully addresses and acts on all criteria listed above
- Tier Two: Fails to address/act on one criterion within the specified authenticity criteria
- Tier Three: Fails to address/act on two or more criteria within the specified authenticity criterion

	Authenticity	Social Justice	Environmental
Tier 1 100%	1. Gold Standard	- Supports marginalized communities most affected by climate change e.g. First Nations, racialized, low-income - Community ownership or involvement - Benefits to the community: jobs, income, social services, infrastructure, etc.	- Contributes to biodiversity, circular economy/waste reduction, improved air/soil/water quality, etc.
Tier 2 75%	1. Voluntary Carbon Standard 2. ISO-14064-2 and ISO 14064-3 Standards 3. BC Greenhouse Gas Emission Control Regulation/ Offset Protocol: Forest Carbon	- Stakeholder consultation - Mitigates social impacts - Corrective justice: options for accountability and compensation	- Environmental impact assessment - Mitigates environmental impacts - Permanence and Leakage calculations
Tier 3 25%	1. Voluntary Offset Standard 2.Ver+ Standard	No obvious social impacts	No obvious environmental impacts
Ineligible 0%	N/A	Negative social impacts	Negative environmental impacts

Pillar Weighing

All three categories are evaluated separately and different weighing options are present depending on what categories different parties prefer to pay more attention to.



Option One: **For the equal weighting of all three categories**
33.3% justice, 33.3% authenticity, 33.3% environmental

Option Two: **For a larger weight on the justice category**
50% justice, 25% authenticity, 25% environmental

To assign a scoring to your project, edit this google sheet to your own weighing preference

Project Evaluation Walkthrough

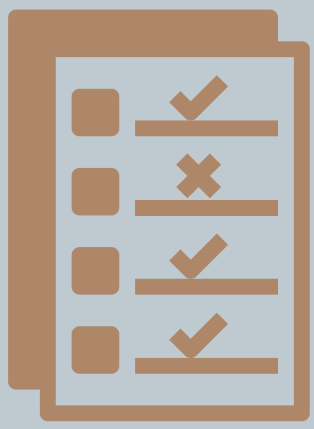
Example Evaluation Project: *Great Bear (South Central Coast) Forest Carbon Project - Grandfathered under GGIRCA (BC Carbon Registry, n.d.; Carbon Credit Corp, 2012; Offsetters Clean Technology, 2021*

Project Background: Since 2011, the Great Bear (South Central Coast) project has been operating as a sequestration carbon offset project based in BC, Canada and is run by the Nanwakolas Offset Limited Partnership. The Nanwakolas and the Great Bear Carbon Credit Corporation oversee the project with administration assistance from Ostrom Climate. The project works to generate emission reductions by providing protection for forest areas previously used for commercial logging. 1.5 million hectares of land and fresh water and over 780,000 hectares of productive forest land are included in the project. From the activities of the project, around 218,000 hectares of land are now protected in Conservancies or Biodiversity, Mining, and Tourism Areas (BMTAs).

Authenticity: Tier 2

- "This project, located in Coastal British Columbia (BC), is consistent with an Improved Forest Management project type within the BC Forest Carbon Offset Protocol (FCOP)" (10)
- According to the authenticity tier system, the BC Forest Carbon Offset Protocol is rated tier two alongside the BC Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Control Regulation
- Leakage: Appropriate leakage calculation for this project using the BC FCOP (70).
- The plan also gives a detailed explanation of what leakage consists of and how it can be calculated (70-71).
- Permanence: Detailed mention of environmental risks in the project plan (57-64). The plan also includes mitigation strategies for each identified risk (57-64)

Project Evaluation Walkthrough Cont.



Environmental: Tier 1

- Mitigation: The project aims to establish protected areas and reserves at multiple scales (48; 51). Mention of conservatory
- areas within the island and conservation laws (23; 53).
- Benefits: Mentions that "the project enhances all aspects of biodiversity, water, and other environmental attributes by retaining and protecting the existing forest in intact, fully functioning ecosystems."(123)

Social Justice: Tier 1

- Partnership with Marginalized Communities: "This agreement marked the beginning of a unique partnership between First Nations on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii and the Province of BC. The agreement specifically stated that the "Parties are committed to work together in the spirit of mutual recognition, respect and reconciliation on a G2G basis to resolve land-use conflicts and to implement interim measures initiatives."(47)
- Economic Benefits for Community: "The Project Proponents have established the Nanwakolas Carbon Corporation (GBCC) to mitigate costs and risks for community members and to distribute the revenue to each community according to an agreed revenue sharing formula between the Project Proponents." (56)

If weighted equally: Score= 90.75% A+
If weighted using Option 2: Score = 93.75% A+

Stakeholder Recommendations

Below are some recommendations that UBC faculty, staff, and students can take into consideration

UBC Campus & Community Planning:

- Develop a request for proposals process that aligns with the evaluation tool outlined in the guide when choosing scope 3 carbon offset projects to invest in.
- This creates a screening process and pushes third-party offset companies to meet the outlined evaluation standard

UBC Departments:

- Establish and share resources and incentives to encourage reducing air travel.
- i.e. increase department funding if virtual options are chosen when possible.
- Invest in virtual conferencing options
- When reducing the scope 3 emissions, choose offset projects from the attached list or use an evaluation tool for newly-developed projects.
- Eliminate the advantage given to grant and career applicants due to air travel (presenting in-person at conferences)

UBC Staff, Researchers, and Students:

- Air travel should be only used if necessary (i.e. engaging with external communities, conducting field studies)
- Refer to UBC Library Climate Action Decision Tree
- Efforts to reduce the necessity of travel for successful academic work, and to increase the use of virtual alternatives can improve equity and accessibility within academia
- Publicly commit to reducing and/or avoiding air travel. Public declarations of this kind, especially from senior staff members, have been shown to have a tangible effect on the decision-making of peers when it comes to environmental action.

How to Evaluate & Purchase Offsets

Instructions on how to evaluate your own offset projects, and purchase through registries

Evaluation Tips:

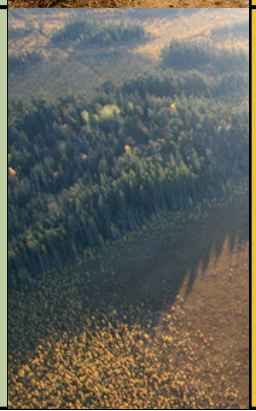
- In order to evaluate offset projects, locate project plans.
  - Initial project plans are commonly referred to as "GHG reports"
  - For authenticity ranking: ctrl F search for key word "standard"
  - For justice ranking: ctrl F search for key words "community", "consultation", "stakeholder", "social", "partnership"
  - For environmental ranking: ctrl F search for key words "environment", "benefits"

Purchasing Offsets:

- It is recommended to use the Carbonzero platform to purchase offsets
- Purchasers are able to buy offsets as an individual or an organization.
- Carbonzero allows purchasers to calculate the emissions they choose to offset .
- Once calculations are completed, purchasers are able to pick which project they want to support.

Recommended Offset Project Investments

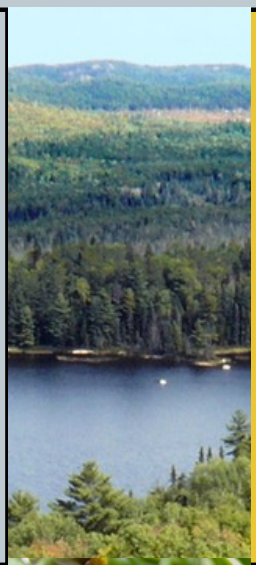
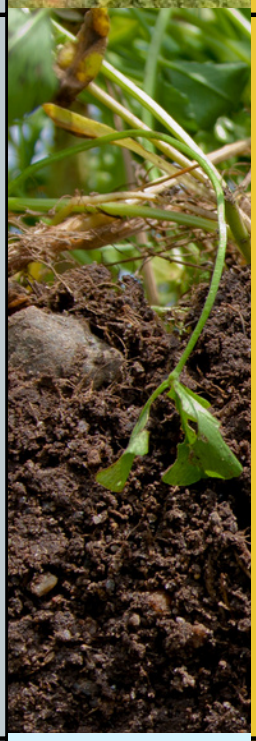
Recommended list of projects to choose from.

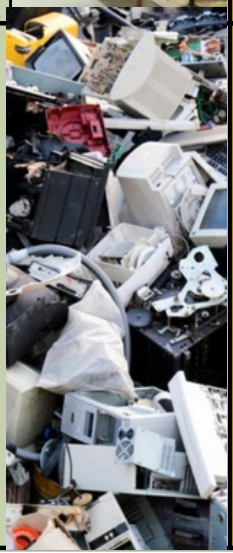
Project Name	Project Type	Project Picture	Authenticity	Justice	Environmental	Scoring
Great Bear Rainforest	Carbon Sequestration/ Forest		Two	One	One	90.75% A+
Cheakamus Forest	Carbon Sequestration/Forest		Two	One	One	90.75% A+
Cree First Nation of Waswanipi	Carbon Sequestration/ Forest		Two	One	One	90.75% A+

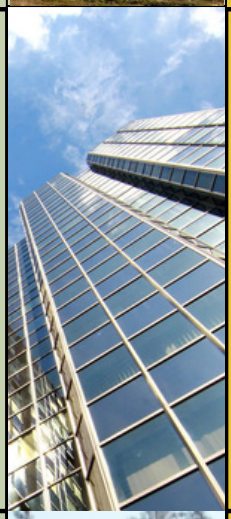
9-11

Additional Evaluated Projects

List of example projects to consider

Ontario Biodiversity Afforestation Project	**Afforestation and Reforestation**		**Two**	**Two**	**One**	**82.5% A-**
Humus Development -	**Reduced-till Agriculture**		**Two**	**Three**	**One**	**66% C+**
Niagara Escarpment forest carbon project	**Improved Forest Management**		**Two**	**Three**	**One**	**66% C+**

Biomass-to-Energy	Biomass Energy		Two	Three	Three	41.25 % F
C & B Farms Biomass Heating	Biomass Energy		Two	Three	Three	41.25 % F
Energy efficiency district heating plant	Energy Conservation		Two	Two	Three	57.75 % C-
Green4Good IT Asset Reuse Project	Waste Diversion		Two	Three	One	66% C+

(CSMB) energy efficiency	**Energy Efficiency**		**Two**	**Three**	**Three**	**41.25 % F**
Energy efficiency Projects	**Energy Efficiency**		**Two**	**Three**	**Three**	**41.25 % F**
Burns Bog Ecological Conservancy Area	**Carbon Sequestration/ Forest**		**Two**	**Three**	**One**	**66% C+**