



A Top Ten



Feature

Well-Managed Forests Can Sequester Carbon And Generate Landowner Income

by Andrew Goldberg*

Even though forestlands provide many valuable benefits to society, including clean air, clean water and species habitat, woodland owners today really have only one way to turn all those things into hard-earned cash: selling timber. It doesn't have to be that way.

The Carbon Canopy, is an organization of private industry and conservation groups, originally created through a partnership between the Dogwood Alliance, and Staples, Inc. The Carbon Canopy is focused initially on building a credible carbon market model for landowners in the Southern U.S., to help them expand protection, restoration and conservation of their forests and to certify management practices to the standards of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification.

The relationship dates back to 2000. Staples, Inc., the world's largest office supply retailer and Dogwood Alliance, a conservation organization focused on protecting forests in the Southern US, found themselves at odds over the impact of Staples' paper purchases on forests in the South. The company is a major buyer of paper, and the southern states are major paper producers. By 2002, however, the conflict was resolved and Dogwood Alliance praised Staples as the first of the office supply retail gi-

ants to adopt an environmental paper purchasing policy.

Significantly, this meeting of the minds created a much bigger market for post-consumer recycled paper and paper made from FSC-certified forests. This need for more environmentally friendly fiber caused Dogwood Alliance and Staples, in early 2007, to explore ways to use the emerging market for carbon credits to expand forest conservation and FSC certification on private lands in the South. Through this collaborative effort, the Carbon Canopy was formed. The organization pulls together conservation groups, landowners, large paper and wood product manufacturers and consumers in an effort to stimulate investment in conservation, restoration and management of working forests to a high environmental standard.

Carbon Canopy believes that through the development of credible markets for ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, everybody wins. Private landowners receive revenue for the ecological benefits their forests provide. Forest product manufacturers receive a stable supply of FSC-certified wood to use in their products. In turn, large paper and wood end-users and retailers are able to offer FSC certified products to reduce their environmental impacts. And all Americans—now and in the future—will benefit from forests that support a more stable climate as well as

biodiversity and watershed protection.

Today's carbon transactions are certainly not as easy as conducting a timber sale on your land, but the marketplace and the expertise necessary are being developed. Understanding this emerging market and learning the basic steps to developing a forest carbon project is critical for private landowners who want to sustainably maximize the value of their forestland.

Basic Steps in Developing A Forest Carbon Project

Forest management practices focused on restoring, conserving and increasing the abundance of older, more mature natural stands can replenish and even expand carbon stocks in forests and help mitigate climate change. This does not exclude harvesting as an option. Landowners can increase carbon stocks and decrease emissions by shifting from clearcutting and/or plantation establishment to selection harvesting and thinning techniques that increase and sustain carbon volumes in older, more mature natural forests.

Through these changes in management forest landowners can produce carbon credits they can then sell to corporations and individuals looking to offset their own carbon emissions. Because of the growing market demand for carbon offsets, a carbon project could make sense on your land if you

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