

Maine Land Trust Registers First California CAR Carbon Project

The Downeast Lakes Land Trust recently registered a forest-carbon credit project with the Climate Action Reserve, the first CAR “improved forest management” project outside California. The carbon project covers more than 19,000 acres of the trust’s 33,700-acre Farm Cove Community Forest in eastern Maine. The trust has agreed to follow CAR’s Forest Project Protocol 3.2, which requires that forest-management projects maintain or increase forest carbon stocks above the expected levels under typical commercial forest management.

The trust registered nearly 200,000 carbon offset credits, valued at more than \$2 million (a credit is the equivalent of one ton of carbon dioxide). The credits are “compliance-eligible,” meaning that they qualify as credits under the California Air Resources Board’s forthcoming greenhouse gas (GHG) cap-and-trade program, which is intended to reduce GHG emissions in California to 1990 levels by the year 2020 and achieve an 80 percent reduction from 1990 levels by 2050. Mandatory compliance with the emissions cap begins on January 1, 2013, for electric utilities and large industrial facilities in the state and in 2015 for distributors of transportation, natural gas, and other fuels. The owners of these facilities will be able to purchase credits to offset their GHG emissions over the cap.

CAR is not an exchange, such as the now-defunct Chicago Climate Exchange (CCX), but is a nonprofit registry of carbon credits sequestered according to detailed protocols and independently audited by accredited verification bodies. Credits are traded via agreements between buyers and sellers; CAR has no role in credit trading or setting prices.

“This project represents the breaking of a log jam for Finite. We have 14 projects outside of California listed on CAR and plan to register about half of these by the end of the year,” said Sean Carney, president of Finite Carbon Corp., which assisted the trust with CAR registration.

The trust’s project is the fourth improved forest management project registered by CAR. Nearly 50 others are listed by CAR as pending registration; about three-quarters of these are outside of California.

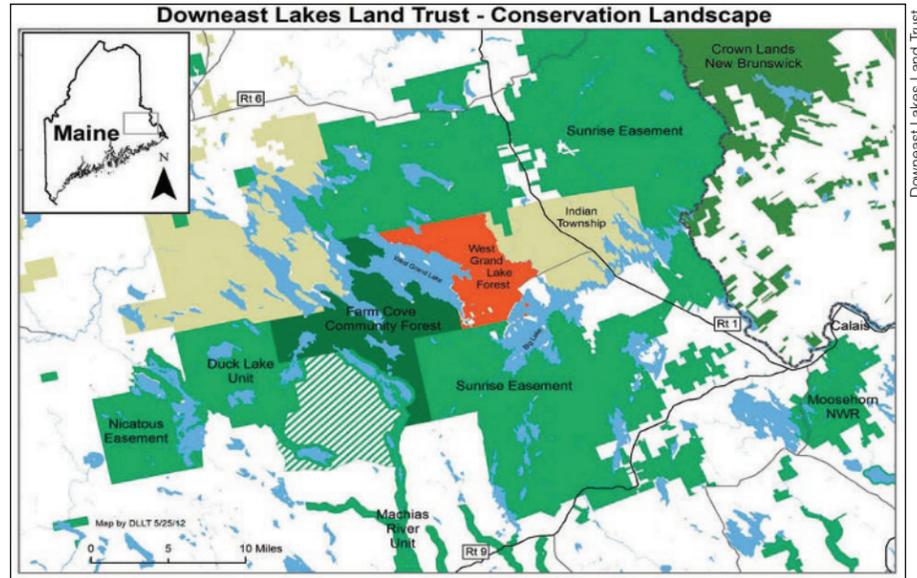
The trust’s 19,000-acre carbon project is on land previously owned by Typhoon LLC, a timber investment management organization. Typhoon purchased the property from Georgia-Pacific in 1999.

The trust’s forest management is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. According to a forest-management certification reassessment report released in September by the Rainforest Alliance, which conducted the reassessment, the trust typically harvests about 8,000 cords per year on its 33,700 acres, primarily hemlock, along with spruce, mixed hardwoods, spruce, fir, and white pine.

The trust has three equally guiding priorities, said Berry: wildlife habitat, public recreation, and a sustainable timber economy.

“We have those priorities because our mission is to contribute to the economic and environmental well-being of our region, and those are the important natural resource values that the forest can provide through our management. We view habitat management and timber harvesting as highly compatible—timber harvest is our primary habitat management tool,” he said.

Under its agreement with CAR, the



The Downeast Lakes Land Trust will use the proceeds of the sale of carbon credits from its Farm Cove Community Forest to help purchase the West Grand Lake Community Forest in eastern Maine.

trust must maintain forest stocking at or above current levels.

“The commitment we made by registering the project was compatible with our existing management plan. We already had timber stocking on the property of about 18 cords per acre, which is well above regional averages,” Berry said. “Our management plan already called for us to increase that stocking toward 20 cords per acre. What’s meaningful about the commitment is that it is binding for 100 years. Before we registered the property with CAR, we could have revised the plan at any point—we were under no obligation to maintain this level of timber stocking. By committing to do so, we are providing a carbon offset that is addi-

tional to a level that could be assumed or guaranteed.”

If stocking increases from the current 18 cords per acre, the trust will accrue additional credits for the added volume. If the trust sells those additional credits, it will essentially have committed to maintaining that level of stocking for 100 years from the date of the sale.

The trust plans to use the proceeds of the sale of its credits to further its effort to purchase the 22,000-acre West Grand Lake Community Forest, which Berry said is a keystone parcel in a 1.4 million-acre international corridor of conserved forests and wetlands between Maine and New Brunswick, Canada.

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