

POSITION STATEMENT
NEW YORK FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION
Forests as Carbon Offset Projects

The Situation

Among the many benefits that forests provide, there is growing appreciation for their role as absorbers of greenhouse gases. Forests are a vast repository of carbon that helps balance the carbon cycle on which life depends. Programs are being developed that allow significant greenhouse gas producers to offset their carbon emissions by paying woodland owners to establish and maintain healthy forests, thereby “sequestering,” or storing, vast amounts of carbon and securing their presence in our future. Projects such as this are an attractive prospect to many who believe that conservation of forests will be difficult unless the environmental benefits they provide are, like other services for society, properly assessed and valued.

The development and implementation of programs to pay small acreage forest owners for sequestering carbon are in their infancy. Accurate measurement of carbon levels in trees, other vegetation, and soil, and how these change over the life of the organism is needed. Accurately assessing the effects of various silvicultural forest management practices on levels of carbon sequestration must be documented. Family forest owners, dominant in New York State, must be educated about carbon credit possibilities and the impact on forest management activities if they commit their lands to any program. Programs for administering carbon credit and payments to landowners must demonstrate real benefit to the atmosphere, be efficient and recognize the need for flexibility, especially when dealing with a plethora of stewardship objectives among family forest owners. It is paramount that programs dealing with carbon credits achieve their targeted goals. Leakage, whereby reducing emissions in one state might lead to increased pollution in other states, must be controlled. An unintended consequence of the increased implementation of carbon offset projects which might reduce harvest levels over time, could be the decline in the forest products industry because of a lower level of available timber.

Our Position

The New York Forest Owners Association (NYFOA) supports ongoing efforts in the establishment and administration of carbon payment programs for New York forest owners which have proven integrity and measurable long-term benefits, without endorsing any specific program. NYFOA supports research efforts in the measurement of carbon sequestration rates in forests and the changes in rates under different management scenarios. NYFOA helps educate forest owners on the costs and benefits of enrolling in various carbon credit programs as they emerge across New York. The Association supports the development of trained foresters to work with owners in measuring their woodlands and developing management plans suitable for enrollment in a variety of programs such as property tax relief, conservation easement agreements, and federal cost-sharing practices. The Association believes that forests managed to encourage active tree growth and abundant reproduction store more carbon than in completely unmanaged forests and woodlands. NYFOA supports programs that are independently certified

through recognized carbon certification organizations. We acknowledge the importance of a viable timber industry, particularly in rural areas and areas dependent on the forest industry.

New York Forests

Forests and open spaces cover almost 65% of New York State (19 million acres). Over 200,000 private owners hold 75% of the state's forests. An additional 500,000 private owners have small, wooded parcels ranging from 1-10 acres. All wooded areas contribute greatly to the economy and healthy environment of New York and provide essential needs such as wood products, food supplies, wildlife habitat, recreation, watershed retention values, carbon sequestration, and more. The forests across New York are also essential to creating a renewable carbon-neutral energy supply through biofuel production, and a welcome natural area free from the bustle of urban living. The future of our woods and forests rests largely with the private owners who sustainably manage these forests while bringing the many forest values to the benefit of all New Yorkers. Each year, New York forests produce \$10 billion of wood products, provide safe water supply for 16 million people, support an outdoor recreation economy of \$3.8 billion, contain essential wildlife habitat, biodiversity, and vital oxygen-producing and carbon sink areas to help ameliorate climate change.

The New York Forest Owners Association

The New York Forest Owners Association promotes sustainable forestry practices and enhanced stewardship on privately owned woodlands in New York State. Through local chapter and statewide activities such as woods walks and tours, the bi-monthly *New York Forest Owner* magazine, and cooperation with similar organizations, NYFOA helps woodland owners achieve sustainable management objectives and heightened appreciation of the unique qualities and importance of New York's forests.

Original Position Statement Adopted???

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