California Compliance Offset Program — U.S. Forest Projects Protocol

PES & Nature-Based Solutions · Good practice · United States of America

Quality score: 20/100

Evidence strength: Cautionary / limited

Summary

California's CARB cap-and-trade offset market has credited ~74 improved-forest-management projects with 130M+ carbon credits since 2013 — but peer-reviewed research found ~29% were over-issued 'phantom' tons, raising serious doubts about real climate benefit.

Key dimensions

Dimension	Score
Carbon — sequestration / storage, evidenced	1/3
Biodiversity — conservation / improvement, evidenced	0/3
Water & soil — retention, infiltration, erosion control	0/3
Fire resilience — risk reduction, evidenced	0/3
Governance, certification & transferability	2/3

Evaluated by C-NAPSE

Data sources

C-NAPSE web research — accessed 2026-07-10

California Air Resources Board (CARB) — accessed 2026-07-10

CARB: U.S. Forest Projects Compliance Offset Protocol — accessed 2026-07-10

CarbonPlan: Systematic over-crediting of forest offsets — accessed 2026-07-10

Badgley et al. 2022, Global Change Biology (peer-reviewed) — accessed 2026-07-10

MIT Technology Review: The climate solution adding millions of tons of CO2 — accessed 2026-07-10

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