

DESIRED OUTCOMES
Permanence Design Element

ODF Forest Carbon Working Group

Working Group Definition – Permanence (aka Reversibility): Ensures that the project’s carbon dioxide (CO₂) benefit either avoided as an emission or sequestered or stored stays out of the atmosphere for a “long-enough” time to meet the climate change mitigation objective.

Definitions for “long-enough” vary – forever, 100 years, or over the commitment period for reducing or offsetting CO₂ emissions. The latter definition for “long-enough” gets at the notion of renting the CO₂ emission offset in which case the rental agreements need to be continued or replaced with other offset activity from one commitment period to the next until permanence with respect to the climate change mitigation objective is achieved.

Related Concepts

Duration – The period over which the project’s carbon benefit is measured, reported and monitored. Not necessarily the same as the duration of actually implementing the project.

Reliability – How secure is the project’s carbon benefit? Permanence gets at the biological aspects of reversibility (e.g., natural disturbance) whereas reliability gets at the administrative and contractual aspects of reversibility. Reliability addresses the legal and organizational infrastructure necessary to ensure that the carbon project is implemented, that the carbon accounting be conducted over the project’s duration, and that the fate of activity giving rise to the carbon offsets is tracked over a long-enough time to sufficiently be considered permanent.

Desired Outcomes for Protocol Approaches to Permanence

- Administratively Simple -- Encourages participation from within all landowner types by being simple, cost effective, and operationally and administratively functional.
- Balance between Sequestration and Storage -- Provides opportunities for projects that promote sequestration and projects that maintain carbon storage.
- Measurable and Verifiable – Project CO₂ removals or emissions avoided as well as the reversibility of avoided CO₂ emissions and the pre-mature release of previous CO₂ removals is measurable and can be monitored/verified.
- Inclusive of all Carbon Pools -- Is inclusive of all significant carbon pools affected by the project. Carbon pools include but are not limited to: live trees, standing dead trees, understory vegetation, down dead wood, forest floor, soil organic carbon, wood products, and other utilized woody material (e.g., material used for biomass energy).
- Consistency with National and International Designs -- Should be able to incorporate into national and global protocols and designs.
- Scientific Basis – Is “long-enough” defined based on atmospheric science regarding how long CO₂ needs to be removed from the atmosphere so as to achieve the climate change mitigation objective.
- Enforceability – Sets specific performance and other conditions so that achieving permanence is enforceable.
- Obligation Assigned – Responsibility for achieving permanence is clearly defined as being an obligation of the offset provider, the offset purchaser, a third-party or some combination.