

Carbon policy co-benefits for other environmental values:

Sustaining Working Forests

1. Keeping land in working forestry is far better for many environmental values than the impact of land conversion (clean air, water habitat, recreation etc). Washington State lost 30,000 acres per year to land conversions over the last decade with the rate increasing. Carbon incentives can motivate sustaining working forests as the carbon price rises.

Reducing Fires and their Consequences

2. Inland forests are massively denser than pre-European history and cannot be sustained in their current state. Reducing fire risks by thinning treatments can improve forest health and restore habitat while also reducing carbon emissions. Carbon incentives will contribute to financing treatments that reduce the risks and extent of wildfire while also reducing carbon emissions, improve forest health, increase tree resiliency in the face of climate change, restore habitat, and prevent the destruction of old forest attributes that are of critical importance for wildlife habitat.
3. On both Inland and Westside forests, current fire risk reduction techniques, include let-it-burn policies on public lands and post-harvest pile and burn of forest residuals yet both emit substantial carbon and particulate matter into the atmosphere which impacts clean air initiatives and human health as well as increasing the carbon emissions from forest related activities. If a carbon credit is large enough it will motivate collecting forest residuals for biofuel as a displacement for fossil emissions. Frequent fires in early history, at least in the dry pine country, did not leave large amounts of dead residuals, so their removal still fits restoration prescriptions. There will be concerns over not removing too many nutrients which are normally satisfied by not removing needles. On the Westside the habitat value of downed wood is more positive, potentially working somewhat against any co-benefit. But the current pile and burn techniques are environmentally negative to more than carbon. Removing forest residuals may only be a practical concern for westside biopathway thinnings.

Protecting Conservation and Diversity in Upland and Riparian Ecosystems

4. The cost of biodiversity pathways with longer rotations will be reduced if carbon credits are given for forest additionality, i.e. where biopathways are practiced albeit at a substantial cost to the landowner they can be partially compensated for by carbon credits. The credit cannot justify the longer rotation because it induces increased fossil emissions via product substitution. But where biopathways are needed their cost would be lower with carbon credits (meeting objectives of HCPs, and some other federal, state and conservation group management objectives).
5. Thinning in eastside riparian buffers can avoid increasing the fire hazard in the riparian zone, although this is now precluded by regulations. Both the impact of fire on carbon and the habitat diversity provided by allowing thinnings in the RMZ are pre-empted by restricting restoration-like treatments in buffers. However, carbon credits could be built into "alternative plans" that provide co-benefits both to riparian habitat and reduced fire damage and carbon.

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Sustaining a quality wood products industry with green building.

- 6. Thinning treatments that improve wood quality and size provide co-benefits of better habitat by reducing excess stand density i.e. "stem exclusion structure" while providing credits for increased substitution for fossil intensive products. It is not clear whether the same credits for volume increases from vegetation control management provides a higher return but it is unlikely to provide better environmental conditions unless through the smaller time window that open stands have on rain on snow flooding.
- 7. Accounting for carbon in both forest and non-forest pools supports the role of a sustainable forest industry in meeting future demand for carbon sequestration in the forest and in sustainable building materials. Recognizing the use of wood as the greenest building material for many applications, not just from a carbon standpoint but other pollution impacts, supports perpetual economic sustainability unlike substitute materials from finite mineral resources.

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- 1. Keeping working forest lands, rather than converting them
- 2. Reducing fires and their consequences
- 3. Protecting biodiversity and riparian ecosystems
- 4. Sustaining quality a quality wood products industry

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can be used to support treatments that avoid devastating fires and emissions while restoring some habitat and preventing devastation to other habitat.

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How does the credit induce fossil emissions?

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Thinning treatments that support quality wood can provide co-benefits to better habitat

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by reducing excessive density as a part of credits that might be awarded to wood that can more effectively substitute for fossil intensive products.