



A Local Solution to Global Pollution

What are Carbon Offsets?

Carbon offsets are pollution equivalents that can be purchased, thereby resulting in the reduction of carbon dioxide pollution in the atmosphere. For example, if you were to purchase 5 tons of carbon offsets, the idea is that a project (renewable energy, tree planting, etc.) will be implemented that will result in 5 less tons of carbon dioxide from being produced or take 5 tons of carbon dioxide out of the air.

If you can't choose a completely zero emissions lifestyle, you can purchase the carbon offset equivalent to your impact. Carbon offsetting is one of many market driven, economic actions you can take to address climate change. While it may not be the answer to global climate change, it is a great education tool that can have a lasting impact.

Standards for Carbon Offset Programs:

- 1) Reduce your impact first- it is important to offset all that you can, offsets shouldn't be used instead of conserving.
- 2) Look for offset providers that support specific projects- Don't settle for a vague claim, make sure you know what you are contributing to.
- 3) Look for Carbon Programs that claim additionality- For an offset purchase to be meaningful, the purchase should cause a new reduction in emissions rather than taking credit for a reduction that would have happened anyway.
- 4) Look for offset providers whose reductions will happen in a clear time frame
- 5) Make sure your offset can't be resold- offset providers deal with an invisible product, so they need to be able to demonstrate that they sell each offset only once
- 6) Look for Offset Providers that are independently verified. There is no national certification for carbon offsets so many providers hire third party organizations to oversee their calculations and their projects.
- 7) Avoid Offsets that purchase "allowances" on a climate exchange. When companies want to reduce their emissions, they can trade carbon emissions reductions that exceeded their targets with other companies.

How does Appalachian offsets compare?

- 1) Local Projects- We work to reduce our local footprint and preserve our air quality in the Appalachian Mountains while combating a global problem.
- 2) Third Party Verification- Our calculations and offset projects are disclosed on our website and review by a third party, Waste Reduction Partners.
- 3) Additionality- None of our projects would have occurred without your contribution.
- 4) Specific projects-Our current projects and progress are always listed on our website.
- 5) Offsets cannot be resold- We do not sell renewable energy credits that can be bought, sold and traded.

Other options for offsetting your footprint:

1) Offsets from future renewable energy projects:
Instead of offering RECs from existing green energy facilities, some providers, like NativeEnergy use the money to help fund construction of new wind turbines, methane digesters, or other renewable energy projects.

2) Sustainable development projects:
Some providers use offset purchases to fund “clean development” projects in developing countries. For example, MyClimate, has created a small hydraulic power station in Indonesia that will generate clean, reliable energy for a Sumatran community

3) Renewable Energy Certificates from current renewable energy generation:
Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs), also know as Green tags, Renewable Energy Credits, or Tradable Renewable Certificates. A green energy provider, such as a wind farm, is credited with one REC for every 1000 kWh of electricity it produces. A certifying agency gives each REC a unique identification number to make sure it doesn't get double counted. The green energy is then fed into the electrical grid and the accompanying REC can then be sold on the open market. RECs incentivize carbon neutral renewable energy by providing a subsidy to electricity generated from renewable sources. These certificates can be sold or traded and the owner of the REC can legally claim to have purchased renewable energy.

Resources:

“Consumers Guide to Retail Carbon Offset Providers”

www.cleanair-coolplanet.org/consumersguidetocarbonoffsets.pdf

Coop America

www.climateaction.org

<http://www.coopamerica.org/pubs/realmoney/articles/carbonoffsets.cfm>