

First UN carbon offset project certified

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Verl Emrick (second from left) and Michael St. Germain (right) of the Conservation Management Institute measure the diameter of a tree at the Boden Creek Ecological Preserve in Belize with the help of two preserve field assistants. Permanent plots at the preserve are used to determine forest carbon stocks in order to calculate available carbon offsets. Credit: Virginia Tech Photo

The Conservation Management Institute, a research center within Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources and Environment, has provided technical expertise for the world's first United Nations' Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) project to receive certification under the requirements of the international Verified Carbon Standard (<http://www.v-c-s.org/>). The UN-REDD Programme (<http://www.un-redd.org/>) authorizes the sale of forest carbon offsets to conserve forests, thereby reducing greenhouse gases.

Researchers from the institute collected data in southern Belize for the Boden Creek Ecological Preserve's Forest Carbon Offset Project. The purpose of the project is to use funding from the sale of forest [carbon offsets](#) under the auspices of the UN-REDD Programme in order to conserve the preserve's 12,876 acres while maintaining its [biodiversity](#) and enhancing the local economy through [ecotourism](#). If the preserve remains financially viable, a private-sector company will operate lodges there, providing jobs and motivation for biodiversity conservation.

A carbon offset is a reduction in emissions of carbon dioxide or other [greenhouse gases](#) made in order to offset an emission made elsewhere. Markets for carbon offsets include companies or other entities that buy offsets to comply with caps on the amount of carbon dioxide they emit.

To qualify for these carbon offsets, the project had to meet specific globally accepted standards for quantifying net [carbon savings](#) (the Verified Carbon Standard), as well as biodiversity and community benefits (Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance standards). In concert with Forest Carbon Offsets, LLC, an international foundation devoted to sustainable forestry, institute researchers collected data on the preserve's biomass, biodiversity, and human community.

"The project is anticipated to avoid emissions of 1.6 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent into the atmosphere over the next 25 years," said Scott Klopfer, executive director of the Conservation Management Institute.

Institute researchers documented the presence of several species listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature as endangered, including the Baird's tapir, black howler monkey, and spider monkey. As a result, the project received a Climate, Community, and Biodiversity Gold Level Standard because of the significant biodiversity resources conserved and the critical location of the property in the immediate

watershed of the Port Honduras Marine Reserve.

Virginia Tech's Conservation Management Institute is working on two additional carbon offset projects in Belize, which are likely to be certified within a year. The institute, the largest natural resources research center in the eastern United States, provides innovative solutions to multidisciplinary research questions that affect natural resource management in Virginia, North America, and the world.

Provided by Virginia Tech

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