

Stop REDD from Harming Communities Locally and Globally

What are offsets? What is REDD?

Carbon offsets (“offsets”) are projects that are supposed to lower greenhouse gas emissions: one offset “credit” is the same as one ton of CO₂ removed or avoided from our air. Through AB 32 and California’s Cap-and-Trade program, companies can trade pollution permits (“allowances”) and/or buy a certain number of offsets in order to achieve the state’s goal to reduce its emissions to 1990 levels by 2020.

In reality, offsets are a huge loophole that give big corporations a cheaper way to pollute without making real emissions reductions on site - or at all. Offsets are also dangerous because they do nothing to reduce our burning of fossil fuels that cause irreversible damage to our biosphere.

REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) are international offset projects that claim to preserve forests in tropical countries. Despite widespread critique of offsets and REDD, California is poised to become the first state to adopt REDD forestry offset credits into its Compliance Offset Program in 2016.

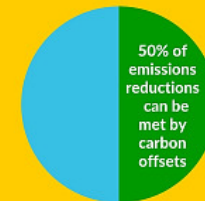
Is California trading away our opportunity to reduce greenhouse gases and clean the air?

AB 32, California’s landmark climate change law, requires the state to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by around 400 million metric tons of CO₂ by 2020.

Cap and trade allows California’s major polluters to meet legal obligations to reduce emissions by buying carbon offset credits from so-called low-carbon projects, such as out-of-state tree planting.



Companies are allowed to use a huge number of offsets. Offset use is “limited” to 8% of emissions, which is just over half of the total emissions reductions required by the cap and trade program.



That means, we potentially lose the opportunity to clean up to around 200 million metric tons of CO₂ here in California.

The Air Resources Board wants to expand our cap and trade program to allow companies to use international forest offsets, but companies will keep polluting and won’t actually reduce their emissions.



Photo Courtesy of Communities for a Better Environment

Who benefits from offsets in California? Top 10 offset users in California

(in metric tons)

1. Chevron USA (1,661,723)
2. Calpine Energy Services (1,550,126)
3. Tesoro Refining & Marketing Company (1,393,592)
4. Southern California Edison Company (1,042,864)
5. Shell Energy North America (617,450)
6. Pacific Gas & Electric Company (446,838)
7. Benicia Refinery and Asphalt Plant (435,785)
8. La Paloma Generating Company (400,068)
9. San Diego Gas & Electric Company (398,720)
10. NRG Power Marketing (331,469)

Of California’s 182 offset projects, 90% of offset projects are located outside of CA.

Why do we need to keep REDD out of California?

1. Big Businesses Win While CA Communities Suffer

Since California’s top offset buyers are the state’s most profitable oil companies and big utilities, those standing to gain the most from REDD are big corporations, carbon consultants (offset brokers), and speculators. Offsets also discourage California-based polluters from making greater emissions reductions on site, which threatens our state’s most vulnerable communities. While nearly half of all Californians live within six miles of a polluting facility, they are disproportionately people of color (62% compared to 38% of whites).

2. Human Rights Violations Against Indigenous Peoples

REDD gives governments, loggers, miners, lawyers, traders, brokers, and Wall Street an opportunity to control and profit off of Indigenous Peoples’ forests. Many Indigenous groups living in REDD territories face the threat of land grabs, institutional violence, evictions, and imprisonment for continuing their cultural practices on the land.

3. Increased Deforestation and Toxic Emissions

- REDD does not equal less emissions: The idea behind all offset projects is that they must create actual reductions in emissions that wouldn’t have happened otherwise, but all these additional emissions reductions, are difficult - if not impossible - to prove.
- REDD creates the perverse incentive of designating more forests for clearcutting: Governments are encouraged to cut more trees now in order to claim that they are reducing deforestation later.
- Protections for forests can be reversed: Even when a government pledges to “avoid deforestation” in an area for a certain number of years, it can later turn around and cut down that same forest after that period is over.
- REDD doesn’t make scientific sense: When fossil fuels are extracted and then burned, it increases the net amount of carbon circulating in the biosphere. Trees are also part of the natural carbon cycle, unlike fossil fuels. So no amount of planting or saving trees can make up for all the CO₂ that gets added to our climate when fossil fuels are burned.

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Taking Land From Farmers: The Purus REDD Project: Acre, Brazil

The Purus REDD Project in Acre, Brazil demonstrates how REDD violates the human rights of small farmers by taking over their farmland and turning it into profit. The project's stated aim is to reduce deforestation by engaging in numerous locally-run activities, such as forest patrolling and agricultural extension training. In order to generate offset credits however, the project limits the rights of rubber tapper families who have engaged in their traditional land practices for decades.

While a 2014 report acknowledged that local farming families are legally entitled to the land, the report also noted that contracts could be designed to take over the titles. By labeling Brazilian subsistence farmers as "deforestation agents", the project's developers were able to legitimize their claims over the forests in the name of conservation. For the local families, the Purus REDD Project represents the continued loss of their basic rights and livelihoods at the hands of the government and corporations.

How Corporations Benefit While Communities Lose: Chevron: #1 user of offsets in California

Chevron is not only California's biggest polluter, it is also the state's biggest buyer of carbon offsets. Since the beginning of CA's cap-and-trade program, Chevron has purchased a total of 1,661,623 offset credits in order to comply with state law, most of which have been U.S. Forestry projects in other states.

Chevron is fully aware of its ability to buy offsets as a way to get out of reducing its toxic emissions. The company has purchased the maximum number of offset credits allowed (about 1.6 million tons) in order to comply with California law.

If REDD is approved into California's Offset Program, big polluters like Chevron would be able to buy large numbers of international forestry offsets in order to continue polluting at such high rates. This would lead to increased environmental hazards for communities like Richmond, CA, as well as a loss of rights for certain tribes in Acre, Brazil.



Photo Courtesy of Asian Pacific Environmental Network

Take Action Against Offsets and REDD!

Expanding California's Offset Program to include REDD would threaten the overall health, rights, and livelihoods of marginalized Indigenous People all over the world, while neglecting the needs of environmental justice communities throughout California that suffer from high rates of pollution.

We need real solutions for reducing emissions and preventing deforestation, not false solutions like REDD!

We demand the California Air Resources Board to oppose REDD and support policies that protect people and the planet:

- Human rights policies such as the United National Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Funding for national programs that promote forest conservation and sustainable forest management
- Moratoriums on additional fossil fuel, mining and dam projects near tribal lands
- Alternatives to CA's cap-and-trade system, which pads the pockets of big businesses and investors

Take action today at bit.ly/NoREDDinCA



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