

GREENHOUSE GAS ACCOUNTING AND REPORTING NEWS

Helping Federal leaders keep track of the world of GHG accounting.

National Developments

EPA Reaffirms Scientific Basis for Regulating Emissions

EPA has rejected petitions challenging its December 2009 finding that greenhouse gases endanger the public health. Here is an excerpt from [EPA's statement](#):



The petitions to reconsider EPA's "Endangerment Finding" claimed that climate science can't be trusted, and asserted a conspiracy that calls into question the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, and the U.S. Global Change Research Program. After months of serious consideration of the petitions and of the state of climate change science, EPA found no evidence to support these claims.

The scientific evidence supporting EPA's finding is robust, voluminous, and compelling. Climate change is happening now, and humans are contributing to it. Multiple lines of evidence show a global warming trend over the past 100 years. Beyond this, melting ice in the Arctic, melting glaciers around the world, increasing ocean temperatures, rising sea levels, altered precipitation patterns, and shifting patterns of ecosystems and wildlife habitats all confirm that our climate is changing.

US Climate Change Bill

The idea of a sweeping climate change bill is dead for this year. Instead, more limited

"spill bills" have been introduced in the House and Senate, and passed in the House on July 31, 2010. See below

- On July 22, 2010, Senate Democratic leaders [said they had abandoned hope](#) of passing a comprehensive energy bill this summer and would pursue a more limited measure focused on responding to the gulf oil spill and tightening energy efficiency standards.
- On July 31, 2010, the House of Representatives [passed its version](#) of a spill bill. No Senate action is expected until Congress returns from its summer recess.
- The House and Senate have both unveiled so called "[spill bills](#)", which focus on improving oversight of offshore oil drilling (and gas production) and hold companies accountable.
- Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid says that [there are not enough votes](#) to include a renewable electricity production mandate in any new spill-related bills.
- Former Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle and others "[insist they have enough votes](#) to include it [the renewable electricity production mandate] in an upcoming Senate oil spill and energy package," despite Harry Reid's statements to the contrary. "We are very, very confident that we've got the votes," Daschle said.

Local, State, and Regional Developments

Western Climate Initiative Releases Design Plan

The Western Climate Initiative (WCI) member states released details of plans to set up their own carbon trading market on July 27, 2010.

The WCI goal is to reduce regional GHG emissions to 15 percent below 2005 levels by 2020.

According to the press release, the regional goal will be reached by:

- Creating a market-based cap and trade system to encourage the development of renewable and lower-polluting energy sources
- Encouraging GHG emissions reductions in industries not covered by the emissions cap, thus reducing energy costs region wide, and
- Advancing policies that expand energy efficiency programs, reduce vehicle emissions, encourage energy innovation in high-emitting industries, and help individuals transition to new jobs in the clean-energy economy.

The plan is slated to begin in January 2012. [Read WCI's plan here.](#)

International Developments

China's GHGs Must Peak by 2020

China's emissions of carbon dioxide need to peak by 2020 if the world is to meet its 2050 goals aimed at limiting climate change, said Nobuo Tanaka, Director of the International Energy Agency (IEA) on July 16, 2010.

The IEA Director delivered his message to China in Beijing. In short, China needs to do more if the global community is "to

stand any chance of achieving a 50 percent cut in greenhouse gases by 2050.” This target is set as the minimum required to prevent catastrophic global warming.

“If we have to reduce emissions by 50 percent globally, what is the least cost to make this happen? China could peak in 2030 or 2035, but the global cost will be much more,” said Nabuo.

Technical Developments

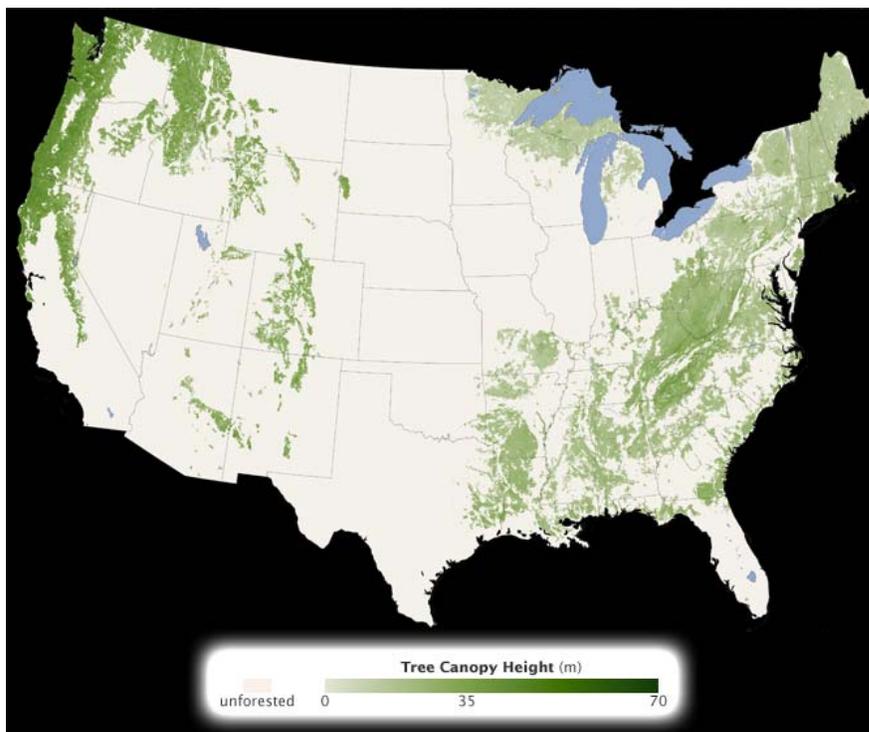
Scientists Have Created a Unique Map of the World's Forests

Using data collected from three NASA satellites (ICESat, Terra and Aqua), scientists have produced a “first-of-its kind map” showing the height of the world's forests.

This is the first global map using a uniform method to measure forest height.

The map should help inventory how much carbon is stored in forests and how carbon cycles through forest ecosystems.

[Read more by clicking here.](#)



A forest canopy height map of the contiguous United States. Credit: NASA Earth Observatory/Image by Jesse Allen and Robert Simmon/Based on data from Michael Lefsky. <http://www.nasa.gov/topics/earth/features/forest-height-map.html>

DID YOU KNOW...GHG ACCOUNTING FACTS

What exactly is a Carbon Offset?

What is a carbon offset?

A carbon (or greenhouse gas) offset is a unit of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂-e) that is reduced, avoided, or sequestered to compensate for emissions occurring somewhere else in the world. Offset credits are used in cap-and-trade systems as a way for organizations to get credit for emission reductions without (or in addition to) direct reductions. They are also used by businesses, organizations, and individuals as part of voluntary efforts to reduce climate impacts. Offset credits are measured in tons of CO₂-e.

There are five criteria that an offset must meet to be valid.

Real. An offset credit must represent one ton of emissions actually reduced or sequestered relative to the business-as-usual baseline scenario.

Permanent. Offset emission reductions cannot be reversible, so that the stored emissions are re-released into the atmosphere. This applies particularly to forest offsets and geological sequestration, which both carry the risk of reversal.

Additional. Offset projects must be additional above and beyond the business-as-usual reductions. Additionality is fairly subjective, but can be determined by looking at standardized criteria or comparing a proposed project scenario to a business-as-usual scenario.

Verifiable. Emission offsets must be monitored and verified by an independent, qualified third party.

Enforceable. Offsets must be tracked (usually through a registry) and “owned” by only one organization or business to credibly reduce emissions and avoid double counting.

How are offsets traded?

Offsets are traded either in a regulatory market (like the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative) or a voluntary market (more common in the US at present). Voluntary markets have no common standard for offset measurement and verification, although several protocols are in use.

Currently, offsets are not allowed as part of agency emissions reporting for E.O. 13514.

Based on the WRI publication, *The Bottom Line on Offsets*, by Jenna Goodward and Alexia Kelly, August 2010, http://pdf.wri.org/bottom_line_offsets.pdf.

[Read more here.](#)