

## 2010 First Quarter Newsletter

### Building the systems and methodologies for Regional Aggregation

In 2007, Terrain NRM entered into the Degree Celsius Joint Venture with BIOCARBON Pty. Ltd. to pilot a project to aggregate and trade regional greenhouse gas pools beginning with the Wet Tropics. The purpose was to ensure positive landscape/biodiversity outcomes from any sequestration options that were available on the unregulated market or in any future Australian or global regulated market. Under the Degree Celsius initiative, Regional NRM Plans provide the basis for regional carbon aggregation with consequent biodiversity, sustainable agriculture, water quality and community benefits. Over two years of assessment, landholder liaison, and aggregation has resulted in The Australian Wet Tropics Region GHG Sequestration and Abatement Project based on Regional Natural Resource Management (The Wet Tropics Project).

The Wet Tropics pilot project uses existing rigorous Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) methodologies, and the National Carbon Accounting Scheme (NCAS), to cover a range of GHG sequestration and abatement activities based on landholder NRM activities. These cover the full scope of agriculture, forestry and landuse change activities including avoided deforestation and degradation, afforestation/ reforestation based on environmental plantings, and agricultural land management (ALM).

The Wet Tropics pilot project has developed a modular approach to carbon sequestration and abatement methodologies: incorporating carbon pools and land uses immediately where they have robust information and methodologies, and providing a framework for other pools and land uses as they become available

### Lessons from doing

Globally, technical, economic and governance issues are delaying uptake of offsets from agriculture, forestry and landuse activities. The Degree Celsius model provides lessons and solutions for these and other aspects including:



- Landscape positive outcomes, rather than perverse outcomes such as monoculture plantations;
- A framework for governance;
- Compliance costs, reporting and risk are sensibly addressed at the regional scale, diluting costs all round;
- Bioregions are an appropriate scale for landowner engagement and aggregation



## Providing the platforms for policy

In 2009, the Wet Tropics pilot project was compiled into a Project Development Document for verification against the internationally respected Climate Community and Biodiversity Standard for trading in the international voluntary market. The Project was at the final stages of the audit process when the CPRS Bill was released.

The original Bill lacked a coherent response to terrestrial carbon and the agriculture, forestry and landuse sector. For instance, reforestation was “covered” because it is counted toward Australia’s Kyoto accounts but deforestation, while also counted in Australia’s international accounts, was not. The treatment of regrowth was not stipulated. Areas not counted towards Australia’s Kyoto accounts such as improved forest management and soil carbon were not embraced at all. Abatement activities from agricultural practices such as nitrous oxide reduction and enteric fermentation abatement were also not to be included until at least 2013.

Based on our experience of building a regional aggregation case that included a full suite offsets, we had many face to face meetings with both government and opposition politicians and provided a series of briefing papers which lobbied hard for changes to the CPRS, and our efforts have contributed to the full suite of offsets now being included in the amended CPRS currently before the Senate.

The offset provisions of the CPRS Bill are amongst the most advanced in the world and include provisions for any offset that can prove a robust methodology, or in the case of reforestation and regrowth, as direct opt-in.

Many issues remain to be resolved, however, and we continue to work with the Government on robust regional approaches to offsets that provide landscape scale benefits including biodiversity, water quality and landholder involvement.

The Degree Celsius Team were finalists for the Climate Change category of 2009 Eureka Prizes, left to right; Allan Dale (CEO Terrain), Mike Berwick (Chair Qld Regional Groups Collective), Penny van Oosterzee (Manager Degree Celsius), Gavin Kay (Degree Celsius Project Officer), Noel Preece (Degree Celsius Principal Scientist).

## Preparing for Roll-out

Based on the Wet Tropics model we have begun to roll-out systems in other Regions in preparation for a CPRS environment. The workshops provide a context for carbon aggregation; describe Degree Celsius systems including database structure and management, procedures and protocols and auditing and verification requirements; carry out a gap analysis of a Region's systems for aggregating carbon; and develop a plan fill gaps and begin the aggregation process.

Currently Fitzroy Basin Association and Southwest NRM have held the workshops.

## Publications

Van Oosterzee P., Noel Preece and Allan Dale (2010). Catching the baby: accounting for biodiversity and the ecosystem sector in emissions trading. Conservation letters. DOI: 10.1111/j.1755-263X.2009.00090.x

Van Oosterzee P., Noel Preece, Allan Dale and Gavin Kay (2009) Lessons from doing: Implementing a regional scale biocarbon & GHG abatement project with multiple benefits. Poster presentation, the 10th International Congress of Ecology, Brisbane August 2009.

