HOW ARE SAFEGUARDS VERIFIED IN THE CALIFORNIA TROPICAL FOREST STANDARD?

Assuring the protection of human and indigenous rights

The California Tropical Forest Standard (TFS) requires that detailed reports on safeguards are verified by independent third parties to ensure that human and indigenous rights have been protected (TFS page 20). Only jurisdictions that can demonstrate through **independently verified** reports that they continue to meet the rigorous TFS safeguards requirements would be eligible to issue emissions reductions under the TFS.

The TFS requires that partner jurisdictions follow international best practices to ensure that verifications are independent and not influenced by companies purchasing offsets, jurisdictional governments, the California government, or any other interested party. Third-party verification bodies must (TFS pages 18-19):

- Be accredited or approved as qualified to conduct audits by the partner jurisdiction in accordance with ISO Standards 14064-3[i] and 14065[ii].
- Conduct a verification in a manner consistent with ISEAL Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards Code of Good Practice[iii].
- Include individuals in the verification team with expertise in social and/or cultural anthropology and/or social ecology, with expertise in ethnography, social science research or sociocultural analysis, in indigenous and human rights, and in social and environmental standards and safeguards in tropical forest jurisdictions.
- Identify all potential conflict of interest and attest to a lack of conflict of interest through a disclosure process consistent with Section 95979 of the California Cap-and-Trade Regulation.

Partner jurisdictions must establish requirements for employing independent third-parties that meet these TFS requirements and must demonstrate that they have been implemented and enforced. Verification reports must be published and posted to the internet to demonstrate ongoing compliance for each year for which emissions reductions are reported under TFS.

WHAT DO THE STANDARDS REQUIRED IN THE TFS FOR VERIFICATION MEAN?

The ISEAL and ISO standards required in the TFS clarify the international best practices that partner jurisdictions must follow to ensure that verifications are scrupulous and truly independent so that they provide clear assurance that reports are comprehensive and accurate, and that stringent TFS requirements on safeguards and all other aspects are met.

The International Social and Environmental Labelling (ISEAL) Alliance is the global association that sets standards for credible sustainability standards. ISEAL Codes of Good Practice promote measurable change

through open, rigorous and accessible certification systems supported by international accreditation bodies, which are required to meet accepted international best practice.

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is an independent, non-governmental international organization with a membership of 164 national standards bodies. It brings together experts who develop voluntary, consensus-based International Standards that support innovation and provide solutions to global challenges. ISO has published 22542 International Standards and related documents, covering almost every industry, from technology, to food safety, to agriculture and healthcare.

ISEAL ASSURING COMPLIANCE WITH SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE VERSION 2.0 (ISEAL ALLIANCE 2018)

Specifies requirements for implementing a verification system to ensure accurate assessments of compliance with social and environmental standards following globally recognized good practices. It contains 51 detailed requirements covering all aspects of a verification system, including that:

- Verifications are done rigorously and impartially, e.g., requiring that interpreters or technical experts employed by verifiers are independent of the client.
- An oversight body ensures that all verifications comply with the requirements. This oversight body is independent of the verifiers being assessed and has authority to take action to address and remediate any issues it identifies, such as disqualifying a verification report or a verification body.
- Potential risks to impartiality are assessed and measures are adopted to mitigate these risks.

ISO STANDARDS 14064-3 AND 14065

Specify the quality of the process for approving and accrediting verification bodies for greenhouse gas (GHG) assessments, and these rigorous best practices would be applicable to the verification bodies that are also responsible for assessing compliance with social and environmental safeguards.

ISO 14064-3:2006 Greenhouse gases — Part 3: Specification with guidance for the validation and verification of greenhouse gas assertions. This International Standard specifies requirements for selecting greenhouse gas verifiers; establishing the level of assurance, objectives, criteria and scope; determining the verification approach; assessing GHG data, information, information systems and controls; evaluating GHG assertions; and preparing validation/verification statements.

ISO 14065:2013 Greenhouse gases — Requirements for greenhouse gas validation and verification bodies for use in accreditation or other forms of recognition. This International Standard provides GHG program administrators, regulators, and accreditors with a basis for assessing and recognizing the competence of validation and verification bodies.

MORE INFORMATION

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[i] ISO (2006). ISO 14064-3:2006 Greenhouse gases — Part 3: Specification with guidance for the validation and verification of greenhouse gas assertions. International Standards Organization, Geneva, Switzerland.
[ii] ISO (2013). ISO 14065:2013 Greenhouse gases — Requirements for greenhouse gas validation and verification bodies for use in accreditation or other forms of recognition. International Standards Organization, Geneva, Switzerland.
[iii] ISEAL (2018). Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards ISEAL Code of Good Practice. ISEAL Alliance, London, UK.