

## **Schwarzenegger to buy carbon credits for his trips**

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**By MATT WEISER**

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California's green governor will again go boldly where few politicians have gone: He plans to buy carbon credits to offset the greenhouse gas emissions from his extensive air travel.

Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is working with Pacific Forest Trust, a San Francisco group, to offset the emissions. The trust manages a carbon credit program at the Fred M. van Eck Forest near Arcata in Humboldt County. In short, the trust sells the trees' ability to absorb carbon dioxide released when people burn fossil fuels.

The 2,100-acre forest is owned by a foundation affiliated with Purdue University in Indiana. It is the only entity certified to sell carbon credits by the California Climate Action Registry.

"Protecting the environment is a top priority for Governor Schwarzenegger," said Aaron McLear, the governor's press secretary. "A carbon credit program makes sense as a way to offset emissions from his air travel and serve as an example for others to do their part to protect the environment."

The governor will use personal funds to purchase the credits both for state business trips and personal trips.

Aircraft, like automobiles, emit carbon dioxide when they burn fuel, and the gas remains airborne for decades. This unnatural buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere traps heat near the Earth's surface, which scientists say is to blame for the globe's gradual warming.

The warming could melt glaciers, raise sea levels and dangerously alter weather unless greenhouse gases are reduced. Schwarzenegger and his administration have been praised as leaders for their efforts to address the problem.

No details are available yet on how much the governor's offsets will cost - or how much travel and emissions he must offset.

"I do know we're working with his office and his own personal financial advisors on that matter," said Randall Beren, communications director at the forest trust. "I would guess it's pretty substantial. He does a lot of traveling."

Schwarzenegger commonly flies several times a week, using charter jets, between the capitol and appearances and a home in Southern California. He also has a vacation home in Idaho. Tallying those air miles each year is a large task, and measuring emissions adds many variables.

The trust began selling carbon offsets at the van Eck Forest in July 2006 after passing a tough certification process. It requires the property be placed in a conservation easement so it can never be developed, and the owners must certify that the resource will grow as a potential reservoir for carbon emissions. It also must submit to regular independent audits.

So far, the trust has sold offsets only for individual trips at a rate of \$10 per ton of carbon emissions. Buyers have included state Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez and California Environmental Protection Agency Secretary Linda Adams.

These offsets are typically purchased to cover the greenhouse gas emissions associated with a single passenger's air miles, and anyone can do it.

A round-trip flight from Sacramento to New York, for example, causes about a ton of carbon emissions, which can be offset for \$10, using a variety of services.

The money typically pays for programs that reduce or sequester emissions, such as reforestation or clean-energy projects.

Some environmental groups criticize carbon offsets because of weak accountability or because it allows people to justify behavior that is inherently harmful to the planet.

The van Eck Forest is a working forest, which means logging is a part of operations. Money from the offsets helps manage the property and plant new trees to increase capacity to store carbon even as it cuts trees to provide jobs and wood products.

"We're not necessarily looking to go into the offset business," said Beren. "But we're trying to make some hay with these so we can demonstrate to the world that managed forests are really where it is as far as being able to sequester carbon as a near-term solution to climate change."

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