
British Columbia Offset Program

Offset Protocol Policy

2022

Table of Contents

Overview	2
Regulatory context	2
Protocol Development	2
Prioritizing protocols for development	2
Identifying protocol development opportunities.....	3
Proposing an offset protocol	3
Adapting protocols for use in B.C.	3
Process for protocol development.....	3
Review of Approved Protocols	4
Protocol review	4
Deactivating a protocol	6
How to participate	7

Overview

B.C. offset projects support provincial climate goals by creating clean economic opportunities while cutting emissions. Protocols provide a set of eligibility requirements and a methodology for calculating the incremental carbon emissions reductions and/or removals of a given activity type for use in B.C. projects.

This policy lays out a set of straightforward steps for the development and maintenance of B.C.'s offset protocols. This is designed to increase transparency and support development of a diverse suite of protocols that deliver real, quantifiable, verifiable, permanent, and additional emissions reductions and/or removals in B.C.

This document outlines government's policy on how B.C. offset protocols will be:

- Identified and prioritized for development;
- Developed;
- Periodically reviewed; and
- Amended or deactivated.

The policy also outlines a process for stakeholders to submit proposals and ideas for new protocols for the Offsets Regulator's consideration. A clear process with criteria for prioritization is also expected to encourage new protocol ideas that better align with provincial opportunities and priorities. Rights-holders and other stakeholders are also encouraged to share protocols and methodologies from other jurisdictions, which could be adapted/adopted in B.C., to help further streamline the process.

Regulatory context

The [Greenhouse Gas Industrial Reporting and Control Act \(GGIRCA\)](#) together with the [Greenhouse Gas Emission Control Regulation \(GGECR\)](#) provide the authority and requirements for establishing offset protocols in B.C. The Director under GGIRCA is the authorized statutory decision-maker for the B.C. Offset Program (the Regulator). Only protocols approved by the Director under GGIRCA can be used to generate B.C. Offset units (BCOs).

The information contained in this policy is for general purposes and does not constitute legal advice.

Protocol Development

Prioritizing protocols for development

One of the goals of the Regulator is to maximize market-based opportunities for B.C. offset projects while ensuring the environmental integrity of offsets generated. Achieving this goal begins by prioritizing the development of protocols for project types that present the best

balance between emissions reductions, business opportunity, and achieving Provincial objectives. Increased market-based opportunities for project owners will result in augmented opportunities for market-led incremental emissions reductions and removals in B.C. The following criteria will be used to inform protocol development decisions:

- Alignment with B.C.'s broad government priorities;
- Monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) methodology readiness;
- Technological readiness;
- Potential scale of opportunity in B.C.; and
- Marketability of offset units across domestic and international markets

Identifying protocol development opportunities

Offset Protocol development can involve significant analysis followed by a lengthy technical review process. The goal of the Regulator is to create a more nimble and responsive process by giving interested parties the opportunity to share their ideas for protocol development as well as enabling the potential adaptation of quantification methodologies developed by other jurisdictions or registries, if appropriate for use in B.C.

Proposing an offset protocol

Interested parties are encouraged to reach out to the Regulator with their ideas and suggestions for protocols at GHGRegulator@gov.bc.ca. Ahead of reaching out to the Regulator, interested parties are strongly encouraged to be prepared to clearly demonstrate how their suggested protocol addresses the criteria for prioritizing protocols and the requirements set out in the regulatory framework. Project-based protocols (i.e., those developed based on the specific circumstances of a specific project) will not be considered.

The submission of a proposal for a new protocol does not constitute the acceptance of the protocol as a priority for development. Each protocol will be evaluated against the criteria for prioritization and ranked for development accordingly.

Adapting protocols for use in B.C.

The Regulator will conduct a routine scan of the protocols and quantification methods from other jurisdictions and registries to identify those that best meet the prioritization criteria and can be most easily adapted for use in B.C.

Process for protocol development

After an emissions reduction or removal activity has been identified as a priority for protocol development, the process for developing the protocol will include the following stages:

Stage	Purpose
Stage 1 – Review of relevant technical documentation	New protocol development:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To confirm that a suitably robust, scientific peer-reviewed MRV methodology exists and can be readily employed in B.C. <p>Adapting an existing protocol:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To confirm that the MRV methodology incorporated in the existing protocol is a suitably robust and can be easily employed in B.C.
Stage 2 – Regulatory alignment review	To ensure that the administrative requirements of B.C.’s regulatory framework for offsets are addressed, and any technical details reflect the B.C. context (i.e. – B.C. specific data, metric measurement units, regulatory requirements, etc.)
Stage 3 – Internal consultation for policy alignment	To avoid any unintended consequences, policy contradictions or additionality issues stemming from interactions with existing B.C. policy
Stage 4 – Develop protocol for users	To provide users with the protocol and guidance on using the protocol for B.C. projects, including highlighting any potential overlapping or adjacent policy or programming in B.C.
Stage 5 – Public Engagement	To identify potential issues with the practical application of the protocol in B.C., a minimum 30-day consultation period will follow the release of a draft protocol.
Stage 6 – Preparation of final document	To strengthen the final product by incorporating the feedback received from interested parties.
Stage 7 – Legal Review	To ensure the legal integrity of the protocol. Protocol must set clear, binding and administratively fair requirements that can be applied through the professional reliance model.
Stage 8 – Director approval and release	To meet regulatory requirements and officially release the protocol available for use. All approved protocols will be posted to the Developing emission offset projects page .

The protocol development process for a given protocol may be deferred or cancelled at anytime if risks or issues are identified at any stage of the process that cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the Director under GGIRCA in a reasonable timeframe.

Review of Approved Protocols

Protocol review

The Regulator may review approved protocols to assess whether the protocol continues to be consistent with GGIRCA and serve the shared interests of the offset program and project owners. The Regulator will also continue to monitor changes in the regulatory climate as well as

new developments in the scientific literature and quantification best practices to identify any risks or issues that may arise that warrant a protocol review.

What would trigger a review?

Factors that are considered by the Regulator on whether to review an approved protocol include, but are not limited to:

- Environmental, legal and financial risks to the Province or the integrity of the B.C. Offset Program that are related to the protocol’s applicability and use;
- Changes in circumstances post-approval that impact the protocol’s:
 - Alignment with B.C.’s broad government priorities
 - Ability to ensure that projects result in permanent, additional emission reductions and/or removals
 - MRV suitability or efficacy
 - Administrative burden and/or costs;
- Opportunities to expand the scope of an existing protocol to cover additional activities closely related to those already covered in the protocol; and
- Submissions made to the Regulator by:
 - Indigenous governing bodies
 - Stakeholders
 - Interested parties.

The decision to review a protocol will be posted on the [Developing emission offset projects page](#).

What is the review process?

The Regulator will conduct an internal review of existing protocols based on the following process:

Stage	Purpose
Stage 1 – Review of relevant technical documentation	To confirm that the activities covered by the protocol: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are not subject to new legal requirements that were not in place at the time of approval, • Do not rely on assumptions, approaches, quantification or monitoring methodologies that no longer reflect current best practice or the most recent data available, • Are not based on activities which utilize a technology or practice that is no longer considered to exceed business as usual.
Stage 2 – Regulatory alignment review	To ensure that the activities covered by the protocol continue to align with the GGIRCA, GGECR, any other applicable regulations and existing B.C. Offset Program policy

Stage 3 – Internal government scan for policy alignment	To ensure that the activities covered by the protocol continue to align with broader government policy
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What are the potential outcomes of the review process?

Staff will advise the Director under GGIRCA of the results of its internal review. If the Director determines that issues exist with a protocol, the protocol will be deactivated.

In cases where the issues identified with a protocol can be remedied through minor revisions or changes, a new version of the protocol will be approved by the Director for use.

Can new projects be developed using a protocol that is under review?

Given that a potential issue with the protocol has been identified and the ultimate resolution of that issue may result in significant changes to the protocol or its deactivation, no new projects should be developed using a protocol that is under review as the project may not meet the requirements of a revised protocol. Therefore, if using a protocol that is currently under review, the project proponent assumes the risk of being non-compliant with a reviewed and / or updated protocol

Deactivating a protocol

The Director may deactivate a protocol if the protocol:

- No longer aligns with the GGIRCA, GGEGR, any other applicable regulations, and existing B.C. Offset Program policy,
- Covers activities subject to legal requirements that were not in place at the time of approval,
- Relies on assumptions, approaches or quantification or monitoring methodologies that significantly divergent with best practices or the most recent data available, and/or
- Is based on activities which utilize a technology or practice that is no longer considered to exceed business as usual.

What is the process for deactivating a protocol?

In cases where a protocol is being considered for deactivation, the following process will be followed:

- The Ministry will release a discussion document outlining the rationale for deactivation,
- Rightsholders and Stakeholders will be provided with 60 days to provide feedback,
- The Director will consider the feedback provided as part of the decision-making process,
- If the Director decides to deactivate the protocol, owners of existing projects using the protocol will be notified, the protocol will be removed from the list of active protocols and no new projects may use a deactivated protocol.

What happens to projects approved under a protocol that was subsequently deactivated?

Projects may continue to operate as described in an accepted project plan so long as that project continues to meet the requirements of the protocol under which it was approved as well as the requirements under GGIRCA and GGEGR.

How to participate

There are several opportunities to participate in the development and review of B.C. Offset Protocols:

- reach out with questions or protocol development ideas or recommendations for the adoption of MRV methodologies from other jurisdictions by email to GHGRegulator@gov.bc.ca,
- sign up for the B.C. Offset Program mailing list to be notified of engagement opportunities, by sending an email to GHGRegulator@gov.bc.ca, with the subject line “Offsets Mailing List.”
- attend informational webinars to ask questions and provide feedback; check our [webpage](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/climate-change/industry/offset-projects/consultation) for updates (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/climate-change/industry/offset-projects/consultation>);

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy is also available to meet with interested parties upon request.