

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Development of a Module for Avoiding Planned Deforestation Activities under VM0048, v1.0

February 13, 2024

INTRODUCTION

Verra is a global leader helping to tackle the world's most intractable environmental and social challenges. As a mission-driven nonprofit organization, Verra is committed to helping reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, improve livelihoods, and protect natural resources across the private and public sectors. We support climate action and sustainable development with standards programs and tools that credibly, transparently, and robustly assess environmental and social impacts and enable funding for sustaining and scaling up projects that verifiably deliver these benefits. We work in any arena where we need clear standards, a role for market-based mechanisms, and an opportunity to generate significant environmental and social value.

1. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE

Planned (i.e., designated and sanctioned) deforestation occurs on forest lands that are legally authorized and documented for conversion. Planned deforestation encompasses various baseline activities on forest land legally zoned for conversion (e.g., conversion to industrial-scale agriculture or aquaculture, such as crop production, biofuel plantations, or shrimp farms) or other activities (e.g., infrastructure development). Planned deforestation also includes activities where a forest system would be cleared and replaced by a different forest system with a lower carbon stock and where timber recovery was not the primary objective of the initial forest clearance (such as conversion to plantations). Unlike unplanned deforestation, planned deforestation activities are typically outlined in government-sanctioned land planning or management documents. Carbon project activities seek to stop this planned conversion.

Land use change, principally deforestation, is one of the major sources of GHG emissions globally; it is estimated to have contributed 13.6% of global gross anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions in 2021 ([Friedlingstein et al. 2022](#)). Around 420 million hectares (Mha) of forest are estimated to have been lost between 1990 and 2020 (or 178 Mha net, considering afforestation and the natural expansion of forests; [FAO 2022](#)). Some 48 Mha of forests were permanently lost globally between 2015 and 2022 alone ([Boehm et al. 2023](#)). Most deforestation (nearly 97%) occurred across the humid tropics ([WRI 2023](#)).

The world's forests, peatlands, and mangroves jointly store over 1,000 Gt of carbon in their aboveground biomass and soils ([Pan et al. 2011](#); [Temmink et al. 2022](#)). About 340 Gt of that carbon is estimated to be vulnerable to human disturbances and could be released into the atmosphere following conversion or degradation of these ecosystems ([Noon et al. 2021](#)).

The most important driver of deforestation is the global demand for agricultural commodities. [FAO \(2021\)](#) showed that the main driver of deforestation in Mesoamerica and South America between 2000 and 2018 was agricultural expansion, specifically the conversion of forests into pastures for cattle ranching and croplands — including the relatively recent but rapid expansion of oil palm plantations. Infrastructure development was the main direct driver of deforestation in Caribbean countries. [Goldman et al. \(2020\)](#) found that cultivation of oil palm, soy, cattle, wood fiber, cocoa, coffee, and rubber accounted for 57% of all tree cover loss associated with agriculture worldwide between 2001 and 2015; livestock ranching alone accounted for 36%, followed by oil palm expansion and soy. The conversion of forests into pastures during this period was estimated at 45.1 Mha, and most of this deforestation occurred in South America.

Thus, protecting forests, peatlands, and mangroves can generate multiple climate benefits by preventing the release of their large carbon stores into the atmosphere and by maintaining their ability to continue sequestering carbon ([IPCC 2022](#)). Halting deforestation, peatland degradation, and mangrove loss can significantly and cost-effectively limit global warming. These measures can contribute more than half of the available mitigation potential at up to \$100/tCO_{2e} from land-based activities across ecosystems ([Roe et al. 2021](#)).

Limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C will require annual deforestation rates and associated GHG emissions to fall 70% by 2030 and 95% by 2050, relative to 2018 levels ([Roe et al. 2019](#)), to help achieve this Paris Agreement temperature limit. However, global efforts to achieve this near-term target remain well off track. Projects that reduce planned deforestation are currently covered by the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) methodology [VM0007 REDD+ Methodology Framework, v1.7](#), specifically through its methodological module [VMD0006 Estimation of baseline carbon stock changes and greenhouse gas emissions from planned deforestation/forest degradation and planned wetland degradation, v1.4](#). In November 2023, Verra published its new REDD methodology, [VM0048 Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, v1.0](#), along with its first module ([VMD0055, v1.0](#)) for estimating emission reductions achieved by projects that reduce or avoid unplanned deforestation (AUDef). Additional VM0048 modules for other REDD activities, such as avoiding planned deforestation (APDef) and unplanned forest degradation (AUDeg), will be developed in 2024. Methodology VM0007 and its module VMD0006 will be discontinued once all the VM0048 modules are developed.

Verra seeks a qualified consultant to develop a new methodological module for quantifying emission reductions from projects that reduce or prevent planned deforestation (APDef). Such a module would become integral to VM0048.

The consultant will be expected to utilize relevant, useful information from existing VCS methodologies and modules (such as *VM0007* and *VMD006*) and innovative accounting methods developed for other methodologies (such as dynamic performance approaches in *VM0047*), as well as from protocols developed under other initiatives such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Architecture for REDD+ Transactions – The REDD+ Environmental Excellence Standard (ART-TREES), etc. This work will require reviewing Verra’s existing methodologies and methodological modules related to deforestation to identify inconsistencies and opportunities for consolidation. The proposed new module must also incorporate the latest scientific understanding of GHG flows in systems subjected to planned deforestation and consider utilizing innovations in remote sensing and dynamic baselines. In addition, the new APDef module must be consistent with the jurisdictional approach introduced in *VM0048* and *VMD0055* and compatible with Verra’s Jurisdictional and Nested REDD+ (JNR) Framework.

2. SCOPE OF WORK

The consultant will be expected to participate in periodic calls with Verra staff and outside experts throughout the development process to discuss technical challenges and provide updates on draft deliverables. Principal tasks and responsibilities will include, at a minimum, the following:

- **Develop an outline of the new methodological module**
 - Review relevant VCS procedural materials ([VCS Standard, v4.5](#); [VCS Methodology Development and Review Process, v4.3](#); [VCS Methodology Requirements, v4.4](#); [VCS Program Definitions, v4.4](#)) to frame and conduct the development of the new module properly.
 - Review existing VCS methodologies and modules that might inform the development of the new module, including but not limited to *VM0048*, *VMD055*, and *VM0007* and its modules.
 - Review relevant protocols from other initiatives such as the IPCC, ART-TREES, etc.
 - Review other relevant methodologies utilizing dynamic benchmarks (such as *VM0047*) and other performance approaches that may inform the new planned deforestation module.
 - Identify the key methodological and program elements that the module is to include:
 - applicability conditions
 - project boundaries
 - baseline scenario

- additionality
 - non-permanence risk (including considering the risk of project longevity beyond the period of crediting)
 - leakage
 - baseline definition
 - quantification of GHG emission reductions
 - monitoring project performance
- Consider whether these elements would have to be adapted when implemented under VM0048 and under the JNR Framework.
- Consider that the proposed module might be used in projects addressing two or more REDD+ activities (e.g., AUD, APD, ARR, IFM) simultaneously, and should avoid any potential for double counting.
- **Develop the draft module**
 - Define and describe in detail the procedures, criteria, and guidelines that an APD project must follow/apply to fulfill the key methodological and program elements:
 - applicability conditions
 - determining project boundaries, including differentiating between planned and unplanned deforestation
 - construction of the baseline scenario
 - demonstrating additionality
 - evaluating the risk of non-permanence
 - estimating leakage
 - quantifying baseline GHG emissions
 - quantifying GHG emission reductions
 - monitoring project performance

Implementation of such elements should meet, to the extent possible, the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market's Core Carbon Principles requirements, with particular attention to those under criteria 5.2, 6.1, 8.2–8.4, 9.2–9.5, 10.1–10.6, 10.8, and 11.1, as applicable.

- Define rules to ensure that the proposed module allows projects to address two or more REDD+ activities (e.g., AUDeg, APDef, ARR, IFM) simultaneously, rigorously, and effectively.

- Provide guidelines on how these elements need to be adapted when implemented under the JNR Framework.
- Provide guidelines on how APD projects that utilize existing methodologies could transition to the new VM0048 methodology using the new APD module.
- Submit a full module document to Verra staff, which must follow the latest version of the [VCS Module Template](#).
 - Verra staff will assess the module against the VCS rules and requirements; independent peer reviewers will assess technical and scientific rigor and assess innovations, and both will provide feedback. The consultant must iterate with Verra staff and outside experts until all findings are closed.
- **Review and respond to feedback received from the stakeholder consultation**
 - Per the *VCS Methodology Development and Review Process*, all methodologies must undergo a 30-day public consultation. Verra will coordinate the consultation and collect comments from external stakeholders to be reviewed by the consultant. The consultant shall address each finding and revise the module as appropriate.
- **Steer the module through the assessment by a validation/verification body (VVB)**
 - Verra will contract a VVB to assess the module document after the public consultation. The consultant must respond to the findings raised by the VVB and revise the module document as required.
- **Manage the final review and approval by Verra**
 - Verra will conduct a final review and prepare a review report. The consultant shall address any findings and update the module until a final version is approved.

3. DELIVERABLES

The main deliverables resulting from this assignment are as follows:

- 1) Outline of the new APDef module and presentation to Verra
- 2) Completed draft of the module document using the latest version of the VCS Module Template
- 3) Responses to feedback from Verra and peer reviewers
- 4) Updated version of the module document incorporating adjustments stemming from Verra's and peer reviewers' feedback
- 5) Responses to comments received during stakeholder consultation

- 6) Updated version of the module document incorporating adjustments stemming from public consultation feedback
- 7) Updated version of the module document incorporating adjustments stemming from the findings raised during the VVB assessment
- 8) Final module document

4. CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

Verra will use the following criteria for evaluating proposals:

- Strong scientific understanding of and experience with forests subjected to planned deforestation, particularly in tropical regions
- Solid experience in developing GHG accounting methodologies
- Familiarity with the latest developments in forest carbon accounting principles, concepts, procedures, and technologies
- Examples of successfully completed previous relevant experiences
- Familiarity with the forest carbon market
- Strong familiarity with the VCS Program
- Cost, including ensuring that the proposed level of effort is consistent with the outcomes

5. SUBMITTAL OF PRE-PROPOSAL QUESTIONS

Bidders are invited to submit questions related to the information presented in this RFP to forestcarbon@verra.org no later than **February 26, 2024**. All questions and their answers will be posted on the Verra website.

6. RESPONSES TO THE RFP

Proposals should not exceed ten pages and should include the following:

- Description of how the consultant plans to achieve the overall objective, including a timeline for submitting the deliverables
- Description of the consultant's qualifications to undertake the described scope of work, including, if possible, examples of similar projects or clients the proponent has worked for and outcomes achieved
- Estimated timeline for completing the project
- Cost proposal, including the rationale for main budget items
- Resumes/CVs of the consultant's team (not to exceed two pages each)



Verra strongly encourages group submissions from consultants with diverse and complementary backgrounds (academics, project developers, methodology developers, etc.).

All proposals and documents submitted to Verra will be kept confidential.

All documents must be submitted to forestcarbon@verra.org by close of business **March 12, 2024**. The top candidates will likely be asked clarifying questions or invited to discuss their proposal more deeply. Verra plans to finalize the selection of the consultant by **March 22, 2024**, with the work to begin as soon as possible.

Legal Nature of RFP

This RFP is an invitation for proposals and Verra is under no legal obligation to accept any proposal nor proceed with the RFP. Verra reserves the right to amend the requirements at any time.