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# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Development of Jurisdictional Activity Data, Forest Cover Benchmark Maps, and Risk Maps  
for VCS Avoiding Unplanned Deforestation Projects

14 April 2025

## 1 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 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. We also enable funding for sustaining and scaling projects that verifiably deliver these benefits. We work in any arena where we see a need for clear standards, a role for market-based mechanisms, and an opportunity to generate significant environmental and social value.

Verra is issuing this request for proposals (RFP) to produce jurisdictional activity data, forest cover benchmark maps (FCBMs), and risk maps to be used for developing Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) Avoiding Unplanned Deforestation projects as per VCS module *VMD0055 Estimation of Emission Reductions from Avoiding Unplanned Deforestation* and VCS methodology *VM0048 Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation*.

Respondents may be firms, governments, civil society organizations, or other stakeholders, but must not be project proponents.

## 2 INVITATION

Through this RFP, Verra intends to establish a pre-qualified pool of two to four data service providers (DSPs) whom Verra will contract through non-exclusive Long-Term Agreements (LTAs) with an initial contract period of five years. Verra will engage the pool of selected DSPs to develop jurisdictional activity data, FCBMs, and risk maps. This data will be developed on a rolling basis, with each DSP expected to produce data for one tranche of approximately four to six jurisdictions at a time. Jurisdictions will be assigned to DSPs based on expertise, staffing, and availability. For reference, the [Allocated Deforestation Risk Maps Timetable](#) lists the current jurisdictions for which activity data and risk maps have been and will be developed. Verra can share data on expected projects and their extent upon request.

Proposals may be submitted by an individual entity or by a consortium of entities, with the lead entity specified. Selected DSPs, whether a single organization or a consortium, must possess the expertise

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needed to complete all of the components described in Section 5 of this RFP, including development of jurisdictional activity data, FCBMs, and risk maps.

Please confirm intent to submit a proposal at [forestcarbon@verra.org](mailto:forestcarbon@verra.org) by April 18, 2025, with the subject line “Intent to submit – VMD0055 DSP RFP.” Questions may be submitted to the same email, with the subject line “Inquiry – VMD0055 DSP RFP.”

A webinar will be held during the week of April 21, 2025, to address questions; all entities that have confirmed intent to submit will be notified of the webinar.

Proposals must be submitted to Verra no later than 11:59 pm ET on May 12, 2025. Please submit proposals via email to [forestcarbon@verra.org](mailto:forestcarbon@verra.org) with the subject line “Proposal May 2025 - VMD0055 DSP RFP.”

### 3 AWARD STRUCTURE

Upon conclusion of the selection process, Verra will notify successful bidders in writing that they have been selected for inclusion in the pre-qualified pool of DSPs. The bidders selected for inclusion in a pre-qualified pool are expected to:

- i) enter into an LTA with Verra, setting out the general terms and conditions that will govern any and all engagements of the bidders by Verra.
- ii) be able to provide services to Verra as of the effective date of the LTA.

A specific scope of work will be developed for each task order under the LTAs.

All selected DSPs will operate on a revenue-sharing basis, dividing with Verra the Project Activity Data Allocation (PADA) fee from projects within the jurisdictions for which the DSP has developed data. The complete terms of the revenue-sharing plan will be defined in collaboration with the selected DSPs prior to entering into the LTAs. The revenue-sharing structure will be the same for all selected DSPs.

### 4 PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE

Verra’s consolidated REDD methodology, VM0048, supports project baseline construction by allocating jurisdictional deforestation activity data to projects in proportion to the relative risk of deforestation in project areas. This is intended to provide allocated baselines to VCS projects and does not replace nor dispute government Forest Reference Emission Levels (FRELs). Verra will engage governments, use official data where possible, and share all final activity data, including map products, with relevant government agencies.

In this RFP, activity data refers to the area deforested (measured in hectares) over a given time period. The most recent versions of the following documents, available on the Verra website, should be used during proposal development:

- *VM0048 Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation*
- *VMD0055 Estimation of Emission Reductions from Avoiding Unplanned Deforestation*

Figure 1 below sets out the key steps to develop FCBMs and risk maps for project allocation, as per VMD0055. Proposals must cover all of the steps shown.

**Figure 1. Allocation of jurisdictional deforestation activity data (AD) to unplanned deforestation project areas (UDef PA) and unplanned deforestation leakage belts (UDef LB)**

### Estimate areas of unplanned deforestation that took place in the jurisdiction during the HRP

- Step 1: Develop a historical land cover/land cover change dataset for each included activity data category
- Step 2: Calculate the total historical area of each change category
- Step 3: Calculate the uncertainty of estimated historical areas of each change category
- Step 4: Conservatively discount the estimated area of historical unplanned deforestation

### Determine the jurisdictional AD for unplanned deforestation

- Calculate start and end dates of the HRP
- Calculate the average annual rate of deforestation over the HRP
- Include discounting factors into the average annual rate of deforestation based on the uncertainty of the estimates of historical deforestation areas

### Allocate jurisdictional baseline AD for unplanned deforestation to PA and LB

- Step 1: Construct jurisdictional forest cover benchmark map
- Step 2: Develop a jurisdictional deforestation risk map
- Step 3: Allocate projected AD to risk classes within UDef PA and UDef LB

## 5 SCOPE OF WORK

This section outlines steps that successful bidders will complete to develop the necessary data once selected as DSPs; details on completing the tasks are provided in VMD0055 Appendices 1 and 2. Task 1 shall be completed prior to the other tasks; however, the remaining tasks may be completed in whichever order is most efficient.

### TASK 1. Review Documents and Develop Standard Operating Procedures

The DSP shall review Verra's VM0048 and VMD0055 in detail to fully understand how the data products will be used. Based on this document review, the DSP shall draft standard operating procedures (SOPs) for area sampling and mapping.

- The FCPF-FAO SOP templates provide examples of SOPs for area estimation (<http://www.openmrv.org/home>).
- Verra will provide access to a library of SOPs developed from previous phases of activity data collection. The DSP shall adjust an existing SOP or develop an appropriate SOP for each jurisdiction.
- Guidance on sample-based activity data development and remote sensing-based best practices can be found in *Integration of Remote-sensing and Ground-based Observations for Estimation of Emissions and Removals of Greenhouse Gases in Forests: Methods and Guidance Document from the Global Forest Observation Initiative*.

The DSP shall review and evaluate any supplementary materials received from stakeholders. In consultation with Verra, the DSP must determine whether and how all or parts of the submitted data will be used in the subsequent analysis. *VMD0055* Section A1.4.3 and Table 18 provides guidance on deciding whether the data can be used.

## TASK 2. Forest Cover Benchmark Maps

The DSP shall follow the steps described in *VMD0055* Section A1.4.3 to develop a jurisdictional FCBM (*FCBM<sub>j</sub>*) covering the jurisdictional area plus a buffer of at least 10 kilometers outside the jurisdiction's boundary (excluding areas outside the national borders and areas mapped as identified exclusions). This will be used for applying VCS tool *VT0007 Unplanned Deforestation Allocation (UDef-A)*.

The DSP shall also consider the following:

- The FCBM applies a binary classification (forest and non-forest) at three different points in time over the historical reference period. The jurisdictional FCBM has eight transition classes, each representing a unique series of forest and non-forest transitions over two periods.
- There should not be any systematic gaps in the maps (e.g., areas with no data).
- For the accuracy assessment, it could be efficient to use the data collected for jurisdictional area sampling.
- As stated in *VMD0055*, the FCBMs must meet the following accuracy levels:
  - **Deforestation between the start and end of the historical reference period:** The user's and producer's accuracies must each be 70% or greater.
  - **Forest at the end of the historical reference period:** The user's and producer's accuracies must each be greater than 90%.
  - Where it is demonstrated that 50% or more of the forest area of the jurisdiction has a canopy cover of less than 50%, the following accuracy standards may be applied:
    - **Deforestation between the start and end of the historical reference period:** The user's and producer's accuracies must each be 60% or greater.
    - **Forest at the end of the historical reference period:** The user's and producer's accuracies must each be greater than 80%.
- For the primary imagery dataset, a spatial resolution of 30 meters or finer must be used for all periods.

## TASK 3. Development of Deforestation Activity Data

The DSP shall follow the steps described in *VMD0055* Appendix 1 Sections A1.4.1 and A1.4.2 to develop deforestation activity data. The DSP shall also consider the following:

- Sampling may use any design supported by current best practices in sampling-based area estimation: systematic, random, stratified random sampling. The sampling frame must not include "identified exclusion" areas. These are defined in Table 11 in Section A1.4.1 of *VMD0055* Appendix 1.
- Country expertise and local knowledge should be used and ancillary data sources (e.g., very high resolution images, LiDAR) leveraged wherever possible.
- The response design shall be set up in publicly available data collection software (e.g., Collect Earth software package ( <https://openforis.org/solutions/collect-earth/>)).
- The sampling design must anticipate the requirement that the final estimate of the "deforestation" class either has an uncertainty (half-width of the 90% confidence interval of the estimate of the mean) of no more than  $\pm 10\%$  or is subject to a conservative adjustment.

- For the primary imagery dataset, the spatial resolution must be:
  - 10 meters or finer for all periods after 2015.
  - 30 meters prior to 2015.

#### TASK 4. For Activity-shifting Areas Outside of the Leakage Belt, Delineate Areas Available and Estimate the Emission Factor

The DSP shall follow Step 1 in *VMD0055* Appendix 2 to delineate the forest and non-forest land area within the jurisdictional boundaries that is available for leakage caused by geographically mobile agents.

The DSP shall follow Step 2 in *VMD0055* Appendix 2 to develop a spatially weighted emission factor for areas outside the leakage belt that are potentially available for conversion due to activity shifting by geographically mobile agents. Area-weighted carbon stocks of all lands in the jurisdiction must be used to approximate this emission factor.

#### TASK 5. Third-party Expert Review of Deliverables (FCBM and Activity Data)

Following submission of deliverables 1–3 (see Section 6) to Verra, a third-party expert designated by Verra will review the deliverables to ensure compliance with agreed-upon standards and specifications. The DSP shall provide the third-party expert with access to all relevant documentation, data, and resources for verification and data validation. The DSP shall cooperate fully, provide any requested information during the validation process, and adjust deliverables as necessary.

#### TASK 6. Develop Jurisdictional Risk Maps

Risk maps shall be developed for every assigned jurisdiction, according to the following subtasks:

- Subtask 1: For each jurisdiction, the DSP shall develop **benchmark jurisdiction deforestation risk maps** as defined in Section 5.3 in the *UDef-A*. Benchmark maps must be developed for both the testing stage and the application stage using the activity data and FCBMs developed in Tasks 2 and 3 of this Scope of Work.
- Subtask 2: For each jurisdiction, the DSP shall identify and/or derive **relevant covariates** for developing alternative jurisdictional deforestation risk maps. Examples of potentially relevant covariates include distance to roads, forest fragmentation, and population density.
  - *VMD0055* sets out provisions for stakeholders to submit supplementary materials for consideration and potential use by Verra’s DSPs when developing the alternative jurisdictional deforestation risk maps. Where stakeholder submissions are received by Verra, Verra will confirm that they meet submission requirements and share them with the DSP. Stakeholder submissions must then be evaluated by the DSP in Task 1, above, and as described in Appendix 4, Table 18 of *VMD0055*.
- Subtask 3: For each jurisdiction, the DSP shall develop at least two **alternative jurisdictional deforestation risk maps** that incorporate jurisdiction-specific risk factors (i.e., the covariates from subtask 2) for both testing and application stages.
- Subtask 4: For each jurisdiction, the DSP shall **select the final risk map** to be adopted and used for allocation according to the selection procedures described in the *UDef-A*.

- Subtask 5: For each jurisdiction, the DSP shall present the results of subtasks 1–4 in a brief report to Verra. The report must contain:
  - details on covariate sourcing, a brief description of the covariates, and their basis for inclusion in the analysis plan.
  - all data pre-processing and processing steps. Where new features are derived from covariates, the feature extraction or calculation procedure should also be documented.
  - a list of all software used (including versions) to develop the risk maps.
  - descriptions of the variable selection process for each alternative risk map submitted and a list of variables selected for each alternative model.
  - a description of modeling procedures employed for each risk map, including the selected modeling approach (e.g., random forest, Maxent), hyperparameters, and any other relevant details to help ensure reproducibility.
  - a summary of the testing results for the benchmark and alternative jurisdictional risk maps, including results of the fit and prediction tests using data from the calibration and confirmation periods, respectively, any plots and maps used for model selection, and the final risk map selected to be used for predicting deforestation during the baseline validity period.
  - where applicable, a description of lessons learned, pain points encountered during the process, and recommendations for potential modifications to the *UDef-A*.

## TASK 7. Third-party Expert Review of Deliverables (Risk Maps)

Following submission of deliverables 4 and 5 (see Section 6) to Verra, a third-party expert designated by Verra will review the deliverables to ensure compliance with agreed-upon standards and specifications. The DSP shall provide the third-party expert with access to all relevant documentation, data, and resources for verification and data validation. The DSP shall cooperate fully, provide any requested information during the validation process, and adjust deliverables as necessary.

# 6 DELIVERABLES FOR EACH JURISDICTION

## DELIVERABLE 1

A data report and work plan documenting the following:

- Materials submitted by stakeholders
- Names of submitting organizations/persons
- Procedure used to evaluate such materials
- Explanations of whether and how the submitted materials will be used during development of FCBM and activity data

## DELIVERABLE 2

A report on the jurisdictional activity data and FCBM together with the following materials:

- FCBM and supporting materials:
  - Vector file of the jurisdictional boundary and its buffer
  - Accuracy assessment results

- Input data layers used to generate the map, or platform access where online tools were used
- Activity data and supporting materials:
  - SOPs for forest cover mapping, response design, sampling design, data collection, and data analysis
  - Excluded identified areas (e.g., planned deforestation, planned infrastructure, large-scale natural disturbances)
  - Description of the sampling design
  - Data collected (including stratification layers) and processed; both the raw sample unit-level assessments and any processed results, or calculation sheet used to derive the results
  - Response design implementation (e.g., in Collect Earth or a similar platform)

### DELIVERABLE 3

- Map of available land for activity shifting
- Emission factor for leakage from geographically mobile agents

### DELIVERABLE 4

Risk maps:

- For each jurisdiction, all the benchmark jurisdictional risk maps and at least two alternative jurisdictional risk maps

### DELIVERABLE 5

Covariate layers:

- All covariate layers used in the submitted alternative risk maps for each jurisdiction

Additional technical requirements, such as preferred formats, metadata standards, data types, map class codes, and submission standards, as well as cadence of check-in meetings, shall be determined in conjunction with the DSP at LTA signing.

Verra's final acceptance of the above-described deliverables is contingent upon satisfactory third-party expert review indicating that the deliverables have been validated and found to be in good order, meeting the expected standards.

## 7 CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

A successful proposal will:

- feature staff with prior experience and expertise in:
  - jurisdictional-level forest cover mapping,
  - analysis of remote sensing data,
  - sample-based area estimation,
  - (or familiarity with) REDD and the VCS Program,
  - spatially explicit statistical modeling, and
  - geospatial data science, particularly land change modeling.
- demonstrate capacity and willingness to involve local experts in the sampling design, sample plot interpretation, and mapping elements for each jurisdiction, where possible.

- describe how potential conflicts of interest from direct or indirect financial interests in the jurisdiction (stakes in or relationships to any project) will be mitigated.
- demonstrate willingness and ability to collaborate with relevant stakeholders (especially jurisdictional governments and authorities).

## 8 RESPONSES TO THIS RFP

Please ensure you include all of the following in your proposal. Proposals should be a maximum of 10 pages (not including experts' CVs). Be sure to address both technical expertise and experience in and understanding of relevant jurisdictions.

1) **Your experience** (maximum two pages)

Include the following:

- Brief introduction, experience, and in-house capacity
- Whether you are the sole submitter or would work with other firms
- Conflict of interest disclosure where you (or a member of your association) is affiliated with any project proponents working in the jurisdiction
- Key experts' names, responsibilities, affiliations, and qualifications for the assignment—CVs should be appendices to the proposal

2) **Technical approach** (maximum five pages)

This section must:

- show that you understand the objectives of the assignment.
- outline your technical approach to the tasks.
- set out plans for using remote sensing and other ancillary data sources.
- outline your access to additional data from relevant jurisdictions (if any).

3) **Work plan** (maximum two pages)

Outline a general plan to complete the main tasks within one year for each tranche of 4–6 jurisdictions, with the aim to minimize this timeframe where possible.

4) **Financial proposal** (maximum one page)

Provide proposed revenue share for existing PADA fee. As justification, and to help us ensure that the PADA fee is appropriately set, please provide the required price per hectare.

Verra will keep proposals and attached documents confidential.

Selected DSPs may be asked clarifying questions or invited for further discussions. Terms in this RFP are flexible, subject to mutual agreement between the service provider and Verra. Selection will be finalized by June 20, 2025.

## 9 LEGAL NATURE OF THE 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 terms and conditions of this RFP at any time.