

ART Removals Primer and Frequently Asked Questions

With TREES 2.0, ART has expanded to include jurisdictional-scale crediting for restoring forests - which incrementally remove and store carbon from the atmosphere - adding a pathway to help drive transformational change in the forest sector and achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Background

Protecting the world's remaining tropical forests is an urgent and critical solution to help keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius, while also supporting sustainable development and safeguarding the planet's biodiversity.

There are also many other actions needed in the forest and land use sector to achieve global climate goals. Beyond forest protection, Reforestation and forest restoration are effective ways to remove and store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, while also providing a range of other social and environmental benefits. Reforestation and forest restoration include a variety of activities – such as restoring native forests by planting trees, allowing forests to regenerate naturally, and establishing plantations – all of which can occur across a jurisdictional landscape, at a scale that can balance environmental, social and economic priorities.

TREES 2.0

The first version of TREES, released in 2020, focused on crediting emission reductions from deforestation and forest degradation. TREES 2.0 expands opportunities to credit other necessary actions in the forest sector that enhance the ability of a jurisdiction to contribute to the goals of the Paris Agreement.

TREES 2.0 expands crediting at the jurisdictional scale to include carbon removals that result from the establishment of forests on land without forest cover. This addition represents the first time that a jurisdictional program has established a separate crediting approach for forest-based carbon removals, producing credits that are comparable across jurisdictions and fungible with emission reductions and removals (ERRs) from other sectors.

How it works

- 1. Establishment of eligibility for removals crediting.** Participants that demonstrate that emissions from deforestation and degradation have been reduced below the TREES Crediting Level during the same year are eligible to also credit for removals.
- 2. Determination of crediting level.** The participant calculates the average area in hectares of commercial planting and natural restoration during the five-year historical reference period. This establishes the removals crediting level (RCL), which is area-based. If stratification is possible, commercial planting and natural restoration can be tracked separately, and the natural restoration can apply a RCL of zero, making all new areas of natural restoration eligible for removals crediting.

3. Calculation of credits and deductions. Participants track any new removals areas that are planted during each year of the crediting period and report them to ART. If the areas of natural forest restoration and commercial planting can be distinguished, they are treated differently as follows:

a. Areas of new commercial planting in a given year are compared to the RCL, and only the areas that exceed that RCL area are eligible for removals crediting. The area planted in excess of the RCL is then multiplied by the appropriate removal factor, which should take into account forest type, age, mortality rates and any other parameters that influence biomass accumulation. Leakage, reversal and uncertainty deductions are taken as applicable, and the net quantity is issued into the participant's registry account as serialized TREES Credits. If the area of commercial planting reported does not exceed the RCL, no removals credits are issued.

b. Areas of natural forest restoration (planting or regeneration) in a given year do not need to compare to the RCL, but instead are all eligible for crediting (i.e., they apply a zero baseline). These areas are multiplied by the appropriate removal factor, which should also take into account forest type, age, mortality rates and any other parameters that influence biomass accumulation. Leakage, reversal and uncertainty deductions are taken as applicable, and the net quantity is issued into the participant's registry account as serialized TREES Credits.

c. Areas of natural forest restoration and planting that meet TREES requirements and were planted up to 10 years prior to the TREES crediting level start date are eligible for removals crediting, but only for the incremental growth of these areas that occurs during the crediting period.

4. Ongoing monitoring and reporting. All areas are tracked for the remaining time that the Participant is reporting to ART and all ongoing removals (growth over time in these areas) are eligible for removals crediting. Similarly, any loss of these removals' areas must be reported as a deforestation or degradation emissions.

5. Issuance of credits. TREES Credits issued under this approach will be labelled as such in the ART Registry.

FAQs

1. When can the removals crediting approach be used?

removals crediting is available to any jurisdiction that can demonstrate that its emissions from deforestation and forest degradation are below their TREES Crediting Level for the year they wish to claim removals credits. Claiming removals credits is optional under TREES.

2. How will stakeholders know which TREES credits are generated using the Removals crediting approach?

TREES credits that are issued based on the removals crediting approach are labeled in the ART Registry as such for full transparency.

3. Does TREES 2.0 credit for enhancing carbon stocks in forests that remain forests?

No. The ART Board and Secretariat recognize the important role that enhanced removals from forests remaining forests play in combatting climate change; nonetheless, the ART Board decided not to include crediting for enhancement of carbon stocks from forests remaining forests in this version of TREES based on the difficulty in establishing a credible crediting level at jurisdictional scale. The ART Board and Secretariat will actively monitor technological advances that could improve the accuracy of this type of accounting, for consideration in future versions of TREES.

4. How does TREES 2.0 treat plantations versus natural restoration of native forests?

TREES credits progress against climate change in the forest sector recognizing that the atmosphere is seeing the carbon sequestration benefit regardless of natural forest or commercial forest, and thus, both should be eligible for crediting. ART provides an incentive for natural forest restoration activities that provide the biodiversity and other ecosystem benefits of native forests by allowing all areas of natural forest restoration in a given year to be eligible for crediting. In comparison, removals in areas of new commercial plantations in a given year are credited only to the extent that they exceed a historical reference level.

5. Can removal credits be issued when deforestation is increasing in the jurisdiction?

No. For a given year, jurisdictions are only eligible to credit removals when emissions from deforestation and forest degradation are below the TREES Crediting Level for that year.

6. What safeguards are in place to prevent cutting native forests down to become eligible for removal credits?

TREES includes a safeguard that prohibits the conversion of natural ecosystems and forests. As with other safeguards, participating jurisdictions must demonstrate conformance by reporting against indicators. Adherence to all safeguards is verified and TREES Credits are not issued if safeguard requirements are not met.

Removals that are eligible under TREES must occur on lands that have been non-forest for a period of five (5) years prior to the start of planting or restoration activities.

7. Is there a risk that TREES will encourage the conversion of carbon and biodiversity rich natural habits like savannahs and peatlands?

No. TREES includes a safeguard that prohibits the conversion of natural ecosystems and forests. As with other safeguards, participating jurisdictions must demonstrate conformance by reporting against indicators. Adherence to all safeguards is verified and TREES Credits are not issued if safeguard requirements are not met.