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Statement on California's AB 32 Draft Scoping Plan

PFT Supports State's Draft Plan for Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forests; Integration of Forest Sector

SAN FRANCISCO, CA — The California Air Resources Board (CARB) today released its draft recommendations for specific measures to achieve California's ambitious greenhouse gas reduction goals under Assembly Bill 32.

CARB integrated forests into the draft plan to help mitigate climate change on several levels. Specifically, it calls for development of a system to measure and monitor the forest carbon stocks and sequestration of CO₂ on private and state owned lands. The plan also places a premium on avoidance of forest loss — such as conversion of forestland for development — that would release additional CO₂ into the atmosphere and reduce the potential for future carbon sequestration on those forestlands.

“The Air Resources Board has made a significant step forward by expanding the role of forests as a sector in California's comprehensive plan for reducing emissions,” says Pacific Forest Trust President Laurie Wayburn. “The plan's call for monitoring of the overall sector and mitigation of lost and depleted forests shows CARB wants to build on the success of early action measures to reduce emissions, such as its adoption of the Forest Protocols in October 2007,” Wayburn says, referring to the rigorous accounting rules used to verify emissions reductions from forests.

“Monitoring and measuring our forest carbon will provide the data we need to make good decisions about how to successfully use our best technology for removing CO₂ from the atmosphere – our forests.”

Forests function like a “sink” for greenhouse gas emissions, using photosynthesis to absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere and sequester it for very long periods as carbon. Forest loss and depletion is recognized as the second largest source of global CO₂ emissions, responsible for 20 to 25 percent of current emissions and 40 to 50 percent of historic emissions.

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Wayburn also commends the plan's acknowledgement of the fundamental linkage of the forest and energy sectors, with its recognition of woody biomass as a low-carbon fuel and sustainable, renewable energy source that can reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

“Forests provide multiple climate benefits in addition to their carbon stocks and sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels, such as cooling local weather and sustaining critical watersheds,” Wayburn says. “The incentives included in this plan will enhance these other climate benefits in addition to restoring forests and their natural carbon stocks.”

The draft plan tasks the forest sector with initially contributing five million metric tons of emissions reductions, or three percent of the total emissions AB 32 aims to reduce by its initial target date of 2020. Forests have the potential of achieving substantially more emissions reductions through carbon sequestration and other activities by the plan's secondary target date of 2050.

About The Pacific Forest Trust

The Pacific Forest Trust (PFT) is the nation's leading non-profit organization dedicated to protecting America's private working forests for their many public benefits including climate stabilization. In California, PFT has been instrumental in advancing the role of forests in the state's climate change programs including the development of the Forest Protocols. Nationally, PFT has published two landmark reports: “America's Private Forests: Status and Stewardship” (Island Press 2001) and “Forest Carbon in the United States.” Through its *Working Forests, Winning Climate* initiative, PFT is advising state governments and federal leaders about the inclusion of forest conservation and sustainable management in climate policies, markets and best-practices.

To learn more about the Pacific Forest Trust, please visit: www.pacificforest.org.

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