Summary of the ARB Rice Cultivation Project Compliance Offset Protocol

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Where we have been?

• Rice Cultivation Protocol stakeholder participation process began on March 28, 2013

• Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement:
  – Four Technical Working Group meetings
  – Two Workshops
  – Independent consultations and presentations
  – Worked with agricultural trade groups, conservation organizations, project developers, project registries, and verifying bodies

• Issued a total of three drafts of the protocol
Where are we now?

• October 28, ARB released:
  – An update rice protocol
  – A staff report detailing their logic

• December 15, 5 pm:
  – Deadline to submit comments

• December 18 or 19:
  – ARB Board will vote on the protocol
Wildlife Concerns

- Notes that “implementation of these activities would be within the natural variability of rice farming, and would not cause a significant effect on bird populations.” (Staff Report, pp. 40, 41, 59)

- Excludes the Butte Sink Wildlife Management Area which has the highest concentration of waterfowl per acre in the world. (Staff Report, pp. 10, 40)

- Only allows project activities during the rice growing season to avoid any potential impacts to wintering habitat for migratory waterbirds. (Staff Report, p. 39)

- Has not included No Winter Flooding or Baling practices until further research on the impacts to birds can be completed. (Staff Report, p. 11)
Reporting

• “APDs that operate rice cultivation projects on behalf of multiple OPOs will be able to submit a consolidated OPDR under one cover that includes the required information for each project, including the unique ARB project identification number.” (Staff Report, p.20)

• “The proposed Rice Cultivation Protocol also provides flexibility to the OPO/APD to perform deferred verification covering up to three reporting periods including at least one reporting period with no GHG emission reductions reported.” (Staff Report, p. 20)
Monitoring and Measuring

• “OPOs, APDs, and verifiers may use a variety of techniques to verify project activities including, but not limited to, remote sensing, video conferences, digital photographs (dated and geotagged), or digital escrow services.” (Staff Report p.18, Protocol, 6.2.1 (b), p. 50)

• Removed language from June 20 version such as:

  • “At least four time-stamped digital photographs per field ‘check’ taken from various vantage points during flood-up. The pictures must clearly show the established stand.”
Verification

• Three year pilot program to cover the cost of verification to determine the “the best methods for cost-effective verification of rice cultivation projects” (Staff Report p.18)

• Fund both protocol requirements and “alternative verification procedures to identify practices that are more cost-effective” (Staff Report p. 19)

• Can “contract with a verification body prior to the end of the reporting period to witness project activities.” (Staff Report p.18)
Early Drainage

• “For wildlife conservation purposes in the California Rice Growing Region, no more than 10% of a participating field’s perimeter may be shared with a public road, a field that is also employing early drainage in preparation for harvest activities or land zoned for commercial, industrial, residential, planning, special, or mixed use to be eligible for crediting.” (Protocol, 2.2 (b)(2)(B), p.8)