

Daily Gazette  
December 10, 2009

In the Adirondacks – Blog Entry

## Adirondack Council retires pollution credits

By Stephen Williams

Those out to stop global climate change can debate whether a national carbon-emissions tax would be better than a national cap-and-trade system, but neither is going to happen anytime soon.

One Adirondack environmental group is working to reduce power pollution by working within the existing regional cap-and-trade system.

The Adirondack Council last week purchased an additional 3,000 tons of carbon dioxide pollution allowances at the Northeast Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative auction. It has now bought 10,000 allowances since auctions started in September 2008.

It's a drop in the bucket, since the 10-state emissions-regulating system auctioned allowances 28.6 million tons last quarter — but it makes a statement. The council “retires” the credits.

“There are a limited number of allowances available each year, and we have purchased 10,000 of them with the intention that they will never be used,” said Brian L. Houseal, the council’s executive director.

The idea with cap-and-trade systems is that utilities pay for allowances to emit pollutions, with the number of allowances limited. Over time, the cost of buying allowances is supposed to rise, and encourage utilities to invest in new pollution controls, to reduce those costs.

The money collected at the auctions goes back to the participating states. The auction results announced last week brought \$25.4 million to New York state, said Environmental Conservation Commissioner Pete Grannis. The money will go toward alternative energy and pollution-reduction programs.

Of course, it's really the big power plants in the Ohio Valley that cause much of the pollution affecting the Adirondacks, but they aren't part of the Northeast initiative. And they won't be, barring an act of Congress.

Emissions allowances are sold in lots of 1,000 tons, but the council — just in time for holiday giving and year-end tax planning — is selling three-ton lots to the public for \$25, tax-deductible.

“We had a huge rush of donations for Carbon Reduction Certificates around the holidays in 2008 and expect a similar rush this year,” Houseal said.

Interested? [Click here.](#)