



ADIRONDACK COUNCIL CARBON RETIREMENT PROGRAM

THE PROGRAM: The Adirondack Council has created the first citizen-participation carbon-retirement program in the United States. This program is different from the existing “carbon offset” programs, where the buyer is never sure whether the actions undertaken (tree-planting, methane collection, etc.) are having a measurable effect.

The Council’s **Cool Park. Healthy Planet.** campaign will actually prevent the emission of thousands of tons of carbon dioxide from existing power plants. Its effects will be real and measurable.

REGIONAL GREENHOUSE GAS INITIATIVE: The Council obtained the rights to the first of these emissions by purchasing 1,000 carbon “allowances” from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative’s inaugural carbon auction on September 25. At that auction, power plants from a 10-state region bid for the rights to allowances.

Each power plant in the region must purchase one allowance for every ton of carbon dioxide it intends to emit in 2009. They must continue to do so each year. The total number of allowances issued by the 10 RGGI states will drop each year for 10 years, requiring an overall reduction of 10 percent in the region by 2019.

CARBON AUCTIONS: However, anyone may participate in the carbon auctions. The Adirondack Council was the only environmental or public interest organization to participate in the inaugural auction. We are participating for several reasons.

EDUCATIONAL VALUE: Principally, the organization hopes to educate the public about the potential loss of rare and fragile wildlife habitat that would result in the Adirondack Park from an average annual temperature rise of just a few degrees Fahrenheit. In addition, the organization wants to show its support for the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and promote its expansion to all 50 United States and beyond.

SIMILAR TO LEADERSHIP ON ACID RAIN: New York took similar steps in 1984, when the Legislature created the nation’s first allowance-trading program to control the power plant emissions that cause acid rain. Within two years, several other states adopted similar emissions controls, and within six years, Congress had amended the Clean Air Act to create a national allowance-trading program for acid rain.

1,000 TONS REMOVED: By buying 1,000 carbon allowances, the Council is removing from the market the rights to emit 1,000 tons of carbon dioxide. By continuing and

repeating this practice, the Council and other organizations can limit the total number of allowances available to power companies. This, coupled with the annual reduction in the number of RGGI allowances issued, will allow market forces to drive up the cost of polluting the air. This, in turn, will compel power companies to seek more efficient and clean methods of creating electricity. We encourage others to do the same, but warn that it is not easy.

RGGI DISCOURAGES PARTICIPATION: Because the allowance auction requires purchasers to buy lots of at least 1,000 allowances, the program is not affordable for citizens who want to make a personal contribution to limiting carbon dioxide. Not many people can afford to lay out \$3,000 or more on a political or social gesture.

MAKING PARTICIPATION AFFORDABLE: The Council's Board of Trustees agreed to break our 1,000 allowances into lots. Individuals and groups may retire them by making a modest contribution to the Adirondack Council's **Cool Park. Healthy Planet.** Campaign.

The Council will offer two classes of **Carbon Reduction Certificates**. For a donation of \$25, the Council will send the donor (or a person he or she chooses) a certificate commemorating the retirement of three (3) tons of carbon dioxide.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF CARBON REDUCTIONS? A person would have to take two round-trip flights from New York to Rome to generate three tons of carbon dioxide. Six tons is equal to burning more than 600 gallons of gasoline (almost a year's worth), or nearly one year's worth of electricity use for an average American (according to the US Environmental Protection Agency).

PROGRAM HELPS ENVIRONMENT THREE WAYS: Donors will receive three benefits. First, they get the satisfaction of knowing they have helped prevent actual carbon emissions. They will receive a serial-numbered certificate, suitable for framing, as proof of their contribution.

Second, New York and other RGGI states have committed the revenue they receive from the quarterly RGGI auctions to promote clean energy and energy conservation. So, all of the money the Council already paid at auction for the allowances will go to state-sponsored carbon-reduction programs such as those operated by the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority.

Third, the \$25-donation to the Council is completely tax-deductible, since we don't sell the allowances to the donor, but rather retire them in the donor's name (or the name they choose). The certificates have no cash value – they are simply proof of a good deed toward a healthier environment.

SIMILAR TO EXISTING SULFUR DIOXIDE RETIREMENT PROGRAM: When the Council kicked-off its Clean Air Certificate program for sulfur dioxide (acid rain) reductions in 1997, Gov. George Pataki made the first purchase in a Blue Room press conference at the NYS Capitol. DEC Commissioner Cahill bought the second allowance.