

The Greatest Gift To Give: Carbon Dioxide

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As the holiday season winds down, a growing shopping trend has emerged among those who strive to be environmentally friendly: giving carbon reduction certificates. To some it may just be a piece of paper, but to many it is an effective mean to limit carbon emissions and another way in which an individual can help the environment.

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative is so far the only cap-and-trade program operating in the country. They have a ceiling set on the amount of carbon dioxide companies can release in New York and nine other Northeastern States. With a limit set, there is only so much carbon allotted, and four times a year, companies are able to buy carbon dioxide, in the form of a certificate, at an auction. The certificates become allowances, and are monitored very carefully. If a company goes over their limit, they have to pay a hefty tax. If they do not use all there emission, they can re-sell them. Regardless, there is a set amount of carbon dioxide that can be released in total.

However, recently, a new group has begun to buy certificates, but it has no intentions of actually emitting the carbon dioxide. The Adirondack Council, a not-for-profit environmental group in upstate New York, attends these auctions and acquires certificates. At \$25, anyone can buy a these allotments from the Adirondack Council, and doing so, in turn, forbids any company from ever releasing that amount of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere.

These auctions are open to the public, however require a minimum purchase of 1,000 allowances, which can range from \$2 to \$3.50 a piece. At that price it may be too much for any one person to collect. With an eco-friendly organization taking up the duty of the initial purchase, the public at large can easily buy the certificates and make a difference.

It may be hard for some to see a direct influence made by giving a piece of paper with no practical function. It is an emission offset, and can take any form. It is carbon dioxide that cannot and will not be used by an airliner or chemical plant, for example.

When you purchase one of these reduction certificates, John F. Sheehan, a spokesman for the Adirondacks Council, told the New York Times "you know you're preventing three tons of smokestack pollution."

The Adirondack began last year selling certificates to the public, and while the effect is not massive compared to what is bought and sold by large corporations, the public is responding and enacting actual change. People are responding in great numbers, and the demand for these eco-friendly acts looks to continue to rise greatly.

Carbon reductions certificates can be bought at www.adirondackcouncil.org.