

FCWG 2020-21 Learning Exchange Series: Christine Cadigan (American Forest Foundation) and Austin Rempel (American Forests) Q+A

Funding and Program Structure

Are you exploring any family forest partnerships in Maine?

CC: We do hope to expand our program into the Northeast and in Maine, but we don't have a definitive time period. We have some science and practice development work to do first.

Who are the partners in the Southeast?

CC: Right now, the FFCP is not available in the Southeast. In the meantime, we are seeking partnerships and interest from local groups.

How large is the typical reforestation project?

AR: Project size varies from year to year and landscape to landscape. American Forests plants 10,000 to 13,000 acres a year on average, across our focus landscapes, and this number is growing. The average reforestation project in the landscapes I discussed tends to be around 200 acres. To reach our goals, though, the projects will need to keep getting bigger.

Are there plans to eventually enhance localized monitoring (for example with remote sensing or ground-based plots) beyond the interpolated temporal and spatial resolution that is possible w/ FIA?

CC: Yes, we hope to invest in long-term monitoring via technology solutions to accompany our on-the-ground monitoring. We are exploring what data might be available today and into the future.

For Christine: Perhaps there are opportunities to raise financing for the Family Forest Carbon Program from impact investors including foundations interested in supporting sustainable forestry?

CC: Yes, we are looking for impact investors for the next phase of implementation, but at scale, we need to access a much larger investor market. Our hope is that the first phase will prove the concept and de-risk the investment.

For Christine: How does the VCS methodology address permanence given the contract term?

CC: The methodology itself does not address permanence. VCS has guidance for how to address permanence that spans all methodologies and some special considerations for grouped projects. We will ensure the durability of our claims for 100 years at the program level, contributing to a pooled buffer (via a risk assessment tool) and investing in long-term monitoring.

For Christine: What is the size of family forest that would be ideal for the program? It looks like you anticipate 1,000 acres as average?

CC: We anticipate 125 acres to be our average acre size. We typically think of our enrollment range between 30 and 2,400 acres.

Reforestation Projects

For Austin: Is a draft of that reforestation pipeline paper available?

AR: Yes, hot off the presses:

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/ffgc.2021.629198/full>

Are there alterations to typical reforestation practices that are being implemented on the Camp Fire to provide resilience to climate change (e.g., spacing, planting stock type)?

AR: Definitely. We're planting less densely, and in clumped patterns rather than in 'pines in lines'. For more details please see:

<https://www.americanforests.org/magazine/article/replanting-paradise/>

Carbon

Why should the federal government insure risky voluntary carbon projects instead of just regulating carbon emissions and using carbon revenue to incentivize carbon sequestration?

CC: That is certainly one way the government could mitigate climate change; however, it involves pretty substantial legislative endeavors that may not politically palatable. Instead, we can look at ways that still incentivize private investment through relatively simple federal involvement – activities which have authority and precedent with other commodities.

Who would benefit from rising carbon markets? The landowner or the aggregator?

CC: Our business model relies on long-term ERPA's from companies. Essentially, companies can lock in prices, which is an attractive selling feature. With our anticipated prices locked for the foreseeable future, we're able to provide landowners with specific incentives payments for their contract terms. Should carbon market prices increase and we can sell new ERPA's at higher levels, we are looking to include opportunities for landowners to renegotiate existing contracts (or increase levels on new contracts) so that as much of the money as possible flows to landowners. As non-profit entities, we are not looking to make a profit on this program.

For Christine: Can you please explain carbon insetting?

CC: Carbon insetting is a concept where companies look to reduce emissions within their value chain and supply sheds vs. "offsetting" their emissions from a source that is unrelated to their business.

Land Management

Storage, shipping, time to set up. If tree tubes cost 1.5 times the cost of a tree, would it be cheaper to plant 1.5 more trees and end up with similar survivability?

AR: I actually misquoted – the tubes are running about \$1 each. But in the end planting more seedlings is not cheaper because survival without them is significantly less, and then you have to look at supplemental plantings which are much more expensive.

What is the best way to assure that individual small landowners are compensated fairly since much of the aggregation is occurring early and a true fair market value for the impact has yet to be finalized?

CC: I'm not following the question entirely, but perhaps my response to the earlier question will help?

For Christine: How long is a landowner commitment period for Family Forest Carbon Program?

CC: It depends on the practice. The two practices we have identified thus far have 10 and 20 year contracts.

Additional Questions

What is the potential role of tree genetics in climate resilience?

AR: Tree genetics could play a huge role. This report is a good summary of the opportunity:

https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1077125.pdf

What is the area in the Central Apps?

CC: Please visit www.familyforestcarbon.org for a map.

For Austin: What are shelter tubes? And what are your preferred tubes to protect from deer and other herbivores?

AR: They're essentially plastic tubes that surround and protect the seedling. In most places they're used to stop herbivores, like you mention, but we're also finding that they help reduce water loss and excess sunlight in dry environments. 'Shade cards' have a similar effect and they've boosted survival in our projects in southern California. Vexar tubes work well if herbivory is the main concern. In the LRGV we use 'Tubex', a biodegradable plastic cone that can be reused for over the course of several plantings.

For Austin: Can you clarify what you mean by planting trees with nurse plants? Facilitation?

AR: Yes facilitation is what I meant to say. It's pretty key in some places. For example, we're also using nurse plants and facilitation in plantings in Mexico for the monarch forests (<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fevo.2019.00421/full>).

For Christine: Can you provide contacts to plug local landowners in Vermont with FFCP program opportunities?

CC: Yes, please sign up for more information at www.familyforestcarbon.org