SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND RESPONSES
ERRATA & CLARIFICATIONS AUGUST 2024
MEXICO FOREST PROTOCOL

13 sets of comments were received during the public comment period for the August 2024 Errata & Clarifications (E&C) for the Climate Action Reserve Mexico Forest Protocol, Version 3.0 (MFP). The summarized comments are found below with their respective responses. The public comment period for the Errata and Clarification draft was from August 12th 2024, to September 10th 2024. In addition to the comments presented below, a number of editorial comments were made which, although not indicated below, were considered by the Reserve for the final version.

The documents with the comments can be found on the Reserve's website at: http://www.climateactionreserve.org/how/protocols/mexico-forest/dev/.

COMMENTS RECEIVED BY:

1. Bioforestal Innovación Sustentable (Bioforestal)
2. Brissia PM
3. Canopia Carbon
4. CarbonOf
5. Carbon Plus
6. Consultoría Forestal Olivas y Asociados C.V - M.C. Uriel Esau Olivas Gallegos
7. Forliance GmbH
8. Gerónimo Quiñonez Barraza
9. Hugo MF
10. M.C. Juan Carlos Leyva Reyes
11. The Earth Lab
12. Toroto SAPI de CV
13. TÜV SÜD America

Section 2

1. Improved Forest Management Definition (CLARIFICATION)

Section: 2.3 Project Activities

Comment (Toroto): Prior to the authorization of a Forest Management Program (FMP), the forest owner must complete a dasometric study and characterization of the forest ecosystem to determine the conditions for harvesting. This information is received and analyzed by SEMARNAT, who authorizes the cycle and the rotation of the harvesting, it does not depend solely on the request made by the Forest Owner and the forestry technician.

Response: Thank you very much for the comment.

Comment: The different harvesting rotations can vary by FMP and can have a range of years. Some have as few as 30 years old for oak forest in central Mexico and up to 100 years old in tropical forest. Harvesting cycles can be 10, 12, 15 years, etc. **(Brissia PM, Toroto, Bioforestal, Canopia Carbon, Consultoría Forestal Olivas y Asociados C.V, Forliance, Gerónimo Quiñonez Barraza)**

Response: Thank you very much for the comment. The Errata and Clarification document has been updated accordingly.

Comment: The objective of Improved Forest Management (IFM) is to optimize the production of forest goods and services, while minimizing negative impacts on the environment and promoting the health and biodiversity of forest ecosystems. The Activity Area should consider including low stocked areas in the production category, since they may be harvested in the future. Areas in conservation may also be restored and moved to the production category within a few harvest cycles. The Errata should also consider including considerations for irregular management, especially in tropical forests, since regeneration wouldn't be evaluated the same as in temperate forests. **(Bioforestal, Consultoría Forestal Olivas y Asociados C.V)**

Response: Thank you for your comment. The final version of the Errata and Clarification has addressed different management styles and long-term harvest plans through the FMP. Furthermore, the final version of the Errata establishes that areas verifiably planned for commercial timber harvest within the established rotation are eligible under an IFM Activity Area.

Comment (Bioforestal): To evaluate harvest rotation, some studies contemplate rotations (turns) of 200 years for the regeneration of the forest, where harvesting is done selectively, and effects of regeneration may be less noticeable. It is necessary to consider the number of trees per hectare for different species, succession in the forests, the analysis of pioneers and late species, etc. Passing the PST test with the forest cover change for Restoration Activity Areas is sometimes impossible with satellite images since the clearings (*acahuales*) are not visible.

Response: Thank you for the comment. The final version of the Errata and Clarification implements a simplified Logic Flow (Table 3) to evaluate regenerative silviculture activities in the authorized FMP.

Comment (CanopiaCarbon): According to the Article 73 of the Forestry Law, authorizations for harvesting timber are approved on the basis of a forest management program and are classified by the following:
I. First time harvests.
II. Modification of the forest management program,
III. Endorsement.

These authorizations will be valid for the harvest cycle and the forest owner must request renewals or modifications to this cycle.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment (FORESTAL OLIVAS Y ASOCIADOS S.C.): FSC certification granted to the forest properties is important for the continuous improvement processes that the forest owner must implement, highlighting their evaluation principles such as social, environmental and economic improvements.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment (The Earth Lab): Determining the distribution of age classes may be difficult in FMPs with selective harvesting. We suggest offering alternative methods for these types of forests. Additionally, sometimes there can be small reforestation or restoration areas inside of the production area, please clarify how to consider these areas in the age class analysis, since they may be difficult to see with satellite imagery.

Response: Thanks for your comment. The Errata and Clarification specifies that projects that include a subset of areas must submit the distribution of time since last harvest for all stands that have previously been harvested, separated by even aged vs. uneven aged management. Time since last harvest should be determined based on the authorized harvest cycles and FMP and not depend on satellite imagery.

Comment (Gerónimo Quiñonez Barraza): The classification of areas in FMPs are classified according to the General Law on Sustainable Forestry Development (last updated on 4-1-2024) and specifically in accordance with the Regulations of the General Law on Sustainable Forestry Development (last updated on 12-9-2020).

Response: Thank you for your comment. This has been incorporated into the final Errata and Clarifications.

Comment (Bioforestal): We suggest that the errata consider conditions of different ecosystems and management methods around Mexico. For example, when referring to silviculture activities that will lead to regeneration, in tropical forests the selective harvest method is used and it is difficult to evaluate regeneration, especially when there are also fires and hurricanes.

Response: Thank you for your comment. The final Errata and Clarifications was updated to take into consideration different ecosystems and management methods, in particular for IFM Activity Areas that do not include the entire planned harvest area.

Comment (CarbonOf): In Table 2, there are categories that by law cannot be harvested for example cloud forests, or due to their characteristics such as altitude and slope, harvesting is not feasible. What would be the point of considering these subcategories?

Response: Thanks you for your comment. Table 2 was removed from the final Errata and Clarifications document, which requires that only areas that are verifiably planned for commercial timber harvest may be included in the IFM Activity Area.

Comment (Toroto): What are the criteria that the Reserve will use to assess the alignment between the definition of IFM and compliance with the additionality criteria? And how long will this evaluation take approximately?

Response: The protocol and in this case the Errata and Clarifications define the criteria of additionality through the Performance Standard Test; the final Errata and Clarifications include a logic flow to facilitate this assessment. The additionality test is reviewed during the initial verification.

Comment (Brissia PM): SEMARNAT does authorize harvesting in some categories of Natural Protected Areas, there are several projects already listed in CAR that are in Natural Protected Areas. In areas 3000 meters above sea level commercial harvesting can occur.

Response: Thank you for your comment. Areas that are included in the authorized FMP for commercial timber harvesting may be included in an IFM Activity Area; however, areas where commercial timber harvesting is prohibited or where commercial timber harvesting is not verifiably planned are not eligible to be included in the IFM Activity Area.

Comment (Bioforestal): There are variations in harvesting due to the rotation of stands, but the area allocated to harvesting remains constant. Please clarify how this should be considered, given that geographically the areas change at the end of each FMP. Also, sometimes it is not possible to complete the activities planned in the FMP due to environmental causes (fires, drought, etc.). Please clarify how these situations should be reported and verified.

Response: Thank you for your comments. The Errata states that eligible areas will be determined based on the previous (if applicable), current, and verifiably planned future management activities. Areas are generally considered eligible if verified silviculture activities are implemented that lead to increased carbon stocks. Since FMPs are highly variable and change over time, these areas can only be considered as part of the IFM Activity Area if the FMP and harvest authorizations document silviculture strategies that are consistent with principles of commercial harvesting.

Comment (Forliance): There may be areas classified as Production that are not currently being harvested and that due to low stock conditions, species with low market demand, difficult accessibility, have a low possibility of being incorporated into commercial use. However, it is possible to implement forestry activities that lead to an increase in carbon stocks, such as native species plantation or regeneration activities. This allows forest areas that would NOT pass the performance test to be added as eligible areas for a Restoration project.

Response: Thanks for the comment. IFM Activity Areas are limited to those with verifiably planned commercial timber harvest; however, areas where there is no past or planned timber harvest may be eligible as Restoration Activity Areas if they pass the Restoration Performance Standard Test.

Comment (Hugo MF): I consider that the period of 50 to 100 years (rotation/turn) for regenerative management very long. If talking about natural regeneration (not adult trees) it should refer to the harvest cycle according to the management program in question (10 to 15 years in temperate climate forests and 20 to 25 years in tropical forests).

Response: Thank you for the comment. The intent of the Errata and Clarifications is to ensure that the IFM Activity Area includes all areas planned for commercial timber harvest throughout the established rotation. If limited to the current harvest cycle, this would not allow for the long-term shifts in silvicultural practices required to improve the health and durability of the forest across the entire area planned for commercial harvest.

Comment (TÜV SÜD America): The verification team considers that the subcategory of Conservation and Restricted Use should not be considered eligible as an IFM-type activity area under any circumstances. Additionally, could the restoration category be considered eligible as an area of activity under IFM as long as its additionality is demonstrated?

Response: Thanks for the comment. In general, areas classified under the FMP as Conservation and Restricted Use do not meet the criteria for the definition of IFM and would not be considered eligible for IFM Activity Areas. In certain cases, it may be possible to include restoration areas (defined by the FMP) that are planned for future harvests.

Comment (The Earth Lab): In Table 3, under the “Management Activities”, the justification is unclear. Please clarify whether the intention of the errata is to increase the harvest levels for additionality or to keep the harvest levels low?

Response: Thank you for your comment. The intent of IFM Activity Areas under the protocol is to incentivize silviculture activities that increase carbon stocks in managed forests (i.e., forests with commercial timber harvest) compared to business-as-usual activities. Table 3 “Management Activities” was removed from the final version of the Errata and Clarifications.

Comment (TÜV SÜD America): Table 2.1 mentions that there must be a Forest Management Program authorized by SEMARNAT for timber harvesting. However, "authorized and current", would be more adequate, since it may be possible that it has been authorized but that it is suspended due to some irregularity.

Response: Thank you for the comment. The Errata and Clarifications was updated accordingly.

Comment (TÜV SÜD America): Please clarify Management Reference #5 and whether the restoration activities refer to the protocol definition or FMP classification. In areas where there has not been forest cover in the past 5 years, there wouldn’t be a history of harvest, so we recommend mentioning the different types of restorative scenarios that could be found in a project.

Response: Thank you for your comment. Table 3 “Management Activities” was removed from the final version of the Errata and Clarifications.

Comment (CanopiaCarbon): Please specify the names of the documents required in past, current, and future scenarios (harvest authorizations, annual harvest reports, etc.) to reduce uncertainties and variability across projects.

Response: Thank you for the comment. In Section 7, the required documentation for annual monitoring. Furthermore, the Reserve will publish a standardized template for reporting activities in the FMP.

Comment (Bioforestal): In some states, for previous FMPs, SEMARNAT does not have records of the complete management program stamped or authorized. This is because when modifications are made to the document, these approvals are often made on specific pages, therefore; when the FMP is requested, the FMP may provide copies of the modifications and not the general FMP.

Response: Thank you for the comment. Please contact the Reserve if specific documents are not available.

Comment (TÜV SÜD America): Please clarify the eligibility of Conservation and Restricted Harvest areas, both considered as an IFM activity, or alternatively a Restoration Activity.

Response: Thanks for the comment. In general, areas classified under the FMPs as Conservation and Restricted Use do not meet the criteria for the definition of IFM and would not be considered eligible for IFM Activity Areas under the PST. Within IFM's eligible areas, they could include short-term restoration areas (defined by the FMP) that will be planned for harvest in the future within the established rotation. Areas that are not eligible as IFM Activity Areas may alternatively consider their eligibility as a Restoration Activity Area under the Protocol by passing the Restoration Performance Standard Test and ensuring that they meet the definition of a Restoration Activity Area. Areas that have been degraded due to commercial harvesting under a FMP cannot be included in a Restoration Activity Area.

Comment (TÜV SÜD America): Please specify how to classify areas that are in the production category that were previously harvested in “rest” but are not currently being harvested.

Response: Thank you for your comment. Eligible areas will be determined based on the previous (if applicable), current, and planned future management activities and include those areas that are verifiably planned for commercial timber harvest.

Section 3

2. Performance Standard Test (CLARIFICATION)

Section: 3.13.2.1 Improved Forest Management Activity Areas

Comment: In the last lines of the clarification, it is mentioned that a conservation area is not eligible without demonstrating additionality through the corresponding tool. This implies that, for a conservation area to be included in the Activity Area, it is necessary to demonstrate additionality according to the criteria established in the tool. In other words, once the tool is used and the additionality of a conservation area is demonstrated, that area can be considered as part of the Activity Area. **(Bioforestal, TÜV SÜD America)**

Response: Thank you for the comment. In the final version of the Errata and Clarification, the IFM Assessment Tool as published along with the first public comment draft was removed. However, in general, areas classified under the FMPs as Conservation and Restricted Harvest do not meet the criteria for the definition of IFM and would not be considered eligible for IFM

Activity Areas under the PST. Only areas that are verifiably planned for commercial timber harvest may be included in the IFM Activity Area.

Comment (TÜV SÜD America): Please clarify the eligibility of Natural Protected Areas.

Response: Thank you for your comment. Areas in protected forests that have legal restrictions on commercial harvest declared by SEMARNAT are not eligible as an IFM Activity Area.

Comment: Please specify procedures for projects that were previously paused for ineligible areas, that are now eligible with the errata, as well as projects that were previously registered under V3.0. **(Juan Carlos Leyva Reyes, TÜV SÜD America)**

Response: Thank you for your comment. All forestry projects registered and listed under Version 3.0 will be required to incorporate and adhere to these errata and clarifications prior to their next verification. Following the publication of the final Errata and Clarification, the Reserve will update procedures for projects that transfer from prior protocol versions to comply with the updated criteria.

Section 7

3. Project and Monitoring Reports (CLARIFICATION)

Section: 7.1.2 Project and Monitoring Reports

Comment: It may not be viable to obtain a letter from SEMARNAT to attest to future harvest. The only legal way to know if a management program will be authorized is to submit the request for authorization of a modification or a new management program and obtain the authorization from SEMARNAT. **(Forliance, Canopia Carbon, CarbonOf, The Earthlab, TÜV SÜD America, Bioforestal)**

Response: Thank you for your comment. This consideration was removed accordingly.

Comment: For reporting and annual monitoring, please specify criteria for presenting activities and timelines to reduce interpretation from project developers and verifiers. **(Juan Carlos Leyva Reyes, TÜV SÜD America)**

Response: Thank you for your comment. The Reserve will publish a template to facilitate the ongoing reporting of silvicultural activities.

Section 8

4. Project Verification (CLARIFICATION)

Section: 8.3.2 Project Area Definition

Comment: Please clarify the scope of verifications with respect to future activities planned in the FMP, time periods for planned activities, and reporting changes to the verifier and the Reserve, for both registered and new projects. **(The EarthLab, TÜV SÜD America)**

Response: Thank you for the comment. The Reserve will publish a template or form to facilitate the ongoing reporting of silvicultural activities.

Comment (TÜV SÜD America): Is it necessary to implement additional activities in the forest project outside of those that are required by law within your FMP?

Response: Thank you for your comment. Projects must ensure that the IFM Activity Area is aligned with IFM definition in the MFP V3.0 and Errata and Clarification and that the silviculture activities implemented will lead to improved forest health and increased carbon stocks over the life of the forest carbon project compared to "business as usual" activities as established by the PST. IFM Activity Areas must implement additional activities that improve the forest health, increase forest cover, and maintain carbon stocks for up to 100 years.

IFM ASSESSMENT TOOL

There were a number of comments submitted regarding the IFM Assessment Tool published along with the first draft released for public comment in August, 2024. In particular, comments highlighted the challenges with implementing and verifying the assessment tool and management scenarios as published. Due to these comments, the Reserve made significant changes to the Errata and Clarifications document, removing the IFM Assessment Tool as previously published and simplifying the criteria to facilitate implementation and verification. The Reserve then convened a technical workgroup to review the updated Errata and Clarifications and later published a second draft for public comment (see Summary of Comments and Responses April 2025).

General Comments

Comment: Revise the text to align with specific terms on forest management in Mexico and with the General Law on Sustainable Forestry Development and the Official Mexican Standard SEMARNAT-2023. **(Gerónimo Quiñonez Barraza, TÜV SÜD America)**

Response: Thank you for the comment. The document has been updated accordingly.