

**Illinois Climate Change Advisory Group**  
Subgroup: Commercial, Industrial and Agriculture  
Policy Name: New - Land use offset requirement  
Policy Type: Regulatory  
Estimated 2020 Reductions: Unclear  
5/21/07

**Description**

In Illinois, there is an apparent trend toward converting high carbon capacity lands to low carbon capacity uses and, therefore, less CO<sub>2</sub> is being sequestered today than in the past. On a per acre basis, the CO<sub>2</sub> increase from converting mature grasslands and forests to low carbon capacity uses (e.g., agriculture, development) exceeds the decrease from planting new trees or grasses which sequester carbon at a slower rate.

This straw proposal would create a “land use offset” requirement. It would apply when land is converted from a higher to a lower carbon capacity use and where the development is above a threshold size (e.g., 10 acres) and meets other conditions (to be determined at a later date). Essentially, the developer/owner would be required to replace what is lost (e.g. trees, grasses) with a comparable land use somewhere else. A 1.5 to 1.0 offset would be required, e.g., 1.5 acres for every acre lost.

Note that this is not a carbon offset proposal. Due to uncertainties associated with calculating terrestrial carbon sequestration rates, the proposal is linked to replacing land covers, not carbon, similar to offset requirements sometimes required when wetlands are destroyed/degraded. And as with wetlands, a “bank” of new land covers could be developed to offset the developed lands.

**Rough estimate of reductions from BAU in 2020**

WRI’s Illinois emissions inventory and projections do not account for Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) because the data is highly uncertain. Therefore, it is difficult to calculate the GHG benefits of this proposal. Given more time to document land use changes in Illinois, a rough estimate may be possible.

**Barriers to Implementation**

- Requires a new regulatory structure to track development and offset projects on a statewide basis.