

CARBON OFFSETS

WHAT ARE THEY? WHAT ARE THEY NOT?

A **carbon offset** is a credit for a reduction in CO₂ or other greenhouse gases to counterbalance emissions occurring somewhere else.

A carbon offset is **not** a substitute for emissions reduction. Offsets represent a strategy to counteract remaining emissions that are difficult to further reduce.

STEPS TO OFFSETTING

1. CALCULATE

Use an emissions calculator to gauge your largest sources of carbon emissions.

2. REDUCE

Take meaningful steps to lower your emissions. For some ideas, see the SPEC Zero Fossil Fuels toolkit.

3. OFFSET

Invest in a high quality carbon offset to counterbalance remaining emissions.

WHAT EMISSIONS TO CALCULATE?

Utilities



Emissions from heating, hot water and electricity.

Flights



Emissions from air travel.

Transport



Emissions from fuel use for public and private transportation.

Secondary



Emissions from production and shipping of food, clothing, etc.

OFFSET PROCESS

Individuals or companies identify their largest emissions sources and reduce emissions. Leftover emissions are measured.



Select a carbon offset from an offset provider. The provider invests in a high quality offset project.



The carbon offset credit is retired. A record of the credit is stored in an offset registry so the offset cannot be sold again.



Emissions reduction takes place at project site and a carbon offset credit is issued.



COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

"Carbon offsets are a license to keep emitting"

Offsets do not displace our responsibility to address our emissions.

"All carbon offsets are of equal value"

Not all carbon offsets are of equal value. Quantity does not equal quality when evaluating offsets.