

Carbon capture program gets important validation

By Enterprise Staff

What if there were a carbon project that would revitalize Montana's native grasslands and put money in the pockets of ranchers as well?

There is, according to Western Sustainability Exchange (WSE).

For five years, WSE has been working with Native, a Vermont-based carbon project developer and offset provider, to do just that through the Northern Great Plains Regenerative Grazing Project, a WSE news release said. The program recently became the first grassland carbon capture program in the U.S. to be validated by an internationally recognized carbon registry.

This means the Northern Great Plains Grasslands Regenerative Grazing Program has undergone rigorous review by Verra, a third-party independent certifying organization, utilizing their Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) to achieve validation status.

"Going through this process is not

for the faint of heart. It has taken more than two years to get through the first phase," Lill Erickson, WSE Executive Director, said in the release. "But what it means to our ranchers, let alone the carbon offset buyers and the general population, is extremely important because Verra ensures that rigorous standards are met and methodologies are properly applied."

This validation gives ranchers peace of mind that the project is here for the long term and the confidence and motivation to become better land stewards.

"It's been a game-changer for us," Kevin Halverson, a Big Timber rancher who was one of the first to sign up for the program, said in the release. "I have a son and grandson who want to continue to ranch. The infrastructure we've been able to install with twice-annual payments will allow my family to continue well after I'm gone."

Being a part of this program means landowners receive payments

based on the amount of additional carbon they capture by changing their grazing to regenerative practices. Through Native's HelpBuild program, ranchers can receive upfront financing to help with infrastructure.

"The nice thing about this program is the flexibility," Chris Mehus, WSE Program Director, stated. "It's completely up to the decision-maker on the ranch how quickly and to what extent they implement these practices. The common denominators are non-selective grazing, which means cattle are moved frequently, and grazed pastures are given extended rest periods." This type of grazing increases photosynthesizing by grasslands which captures carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and sequesters the carbon deep underground.

The public at large also stands much to gain from this program.

"Ranchers are not the only ones to benefit," stated Erickson. "We all benefit from the healthy soil,

improved water quality, and protected fish and wildlife habitat that result from the same practices that pull carbon dioxide out of the air."

What's next

Verra's validation and verification processes use detailed procedures for quantifying the project's actual greenhouse gas (GHG) benefits and ultimately quantifying the GHG emissions that were removed by our program, the release said. During the validation stage, which was just completed, documents, procedures, and field and lab methods were reviewed and approved as meeting the rigor of the Verra's Verified Carbon Standard.

The next phase is the initial verification process, which ensures that these practices and processes have actually taken place on the ground and that they did, in fact, sequester measurable amounts of carbon in the soil. Once that step is complete, a company can then receive third-party confirmation of the quantity of

carbon sequestration credits they purchased.

According to the Verra website, once projects have been certified against their rigorous set of rules and requirements, project developers can be issued tradable Green House Gas credits called Verified Carbon Units (VCUs). VCUs can then be sold on the carbon market as a means for companies or individuals to offset their own emissions. "Over time, this flexibility channels financing to clean, innovative businesses and technologies," according to the Verra website.

"It's a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate the environmental integrity businesses demand from the voluntary carbon market," Erickson stated. "Once the initial results are fully verified, companies who seek to reduce or offset their greenhouse gas emissions can do this by supporting our project, and rest assured they have enabled real removals of CO2 from the atmosphere."

Pope in Canada honors grandparents day after issuing Indigenous apology

EDMONTON, Alberta (AP) — Pope Francis arrived for his first big Mass in Canada on Tuesday to honor grandparents, a day after he apologized for the Catholic Church's role in severing generations of Indigenous family ties by participating in Canada's "disastrous" residential school system.

Tens of thousands of people in attendance at Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton, Alberta, cheered as Francis entered and looped around the field in his popemobile, stopping occasionally to kiss babies. Accompanying him was a steady beat from Indigenous hand drummers.

Phil Fontaine, former chief of the Assembly of First Nations and a residential school survivor, urged the crowd to forgive in remarks delivered before Francis' arrival: "We will never achieve healing and reconciliation without forgiveness," he said. "We will never forget, but we must forgive."

It wasn't clear if Francis would actually celebrate the Mass himself or designate someone else to lead while he presides sitting from the side of the altar, as he has done in recent months because strained knee ligaments make standing and walking difficult. Either way, Francis was expected to deliver the homily.

The Mass marks the Feast of St. Anne, the grandmother of Jesus and a figure of particular veneration for Canadian Catholics. Francis' ode to grandparents was to continue later Tuesday with a prayer service at one of North America's most popular pilgrimage sites, Lac Ste. Anne, considered to be a place of healing.

Francis has long lauded the role of grandmothers in passing the faith on to younger generations, citing his own experience with his grandmother, Rosa, while growing up in Buenos Aires, Argentina. For several months Francis has deliv-



Pope Francis arrives at Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton, Tuesday to take part in a public Mass.

ered weekly catechism lessons on the need to treasure grandparental wisdom and not discard them as part of today's "culture of waste."

That message has great resonance in Canada, where Indigenous families were torn apart by a church-enforced government policy of forcible assimilation.

More than 150,000 Native children in Canada were taken from their homes and forced to attend government-funded Christian schools from the 19th century until the 1970s in an effort to isolate them from the influence of their families and culture. The aim was to Christianize and assimilate them into mainstream society, which previous Canadian governments considered superior.

In his first event in Canada, Francis on Monday blasted the residential school policy as a "disastrous error" that did "catastrophic" harm. At the site of a former school in Maskwacis, he apologized for the "evil com-

mitted by so many Christians against the Indigenous peoples" and vowed further investigation and steps to promote healing.

Reaction to his visit and words was mixed: Some survivors stayed away and criticized Indigenous leaders' decision to present Francis with a feathered headdress, which is a sign of respect. Others welcomed his apology as genuine and praised the attention his visit has drawn to the horrors of the residential school system.

Indigenous leaders urged him to make good on his pledge to continue the path of reconciliation with concrete action: turning over church records about the fate of Indigenous children who died at schools, funding therapeutic healing programs for survivors and facilitating investigations of those responsible for abuses.

Francis "can't just say sorry and walk away," said Chief Tony Alexis of the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation.

Cree Nation Chief Vernon Saddleback said many "survivors and thrivers" in his community were pleased: "Words cannot describe how important today is for the healing journey for a lot of First Nations people."

Lac St. Anne is a century-old pilgrimage site where the faithful come and wade into the lake. Francis was to preside over a liturgy of the word service there and bless the waters. In the runup to the pope's visit, Alberta health authorities issued a blue-green algae bloom advisory for the lake, warning visitors to avoid contact with the blooms and refrain from wading where they are visible.

The lake is known as Wakamne, or "God's Lake," by the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation who live nearby and Manito Sakhahiga, or "Spirit Lake," by the Cree. The name "Lac Ste Anne" was given to it by the Rev. Jean-Baptiste Thibault, the first Catholic priest to establish a mission on the site.

Results of 4-H & FFA sale posted

By Enterprise Staff

The 2022 Park County 4-H & FFA sale was held on Saturday afternoon during the Park County Ag Fair.

The sale grossed \$503,537.50. The top 10 buyers were:

- Emigrant General Store
- Stu's Chemical
- Fisher Sand and Gravel

- First Interstate Bank
 - The Flooring Place
 - Don Hilton
 - Frontline Ag Solutions
 - Gardiner Market
 - Central Plumbing Heating and Excavation
 - Sage Lodge
- Park County 4-H & FFA members express their appreciation for the community's support.

Montana deputy who killed 2 was responding to accident

BILLINGS (AP) — A Montana sheriff's deputy was responding to a report of a motorcycle accident on a rural highway when he struck and killed two people, Carbon County Sheriff Josh McQuillan said Monday.

The crash involving Sgt. Kelly Carrington was captured by two video recording devices and happened just north of Roberts on the night of July 15.

Darren Shull, 52, of Billings and Jesse Beck, 45, of Rockvale were struck and pronounced dead at the scene.

Before they were killed,

Beck had crashed his motorcycle along Highway 212 and Shull had stopped to help him, according to a GoFundMe fundraising webpage for Shull's family.

The two men were in Carrington's lane of travel when they were hit, McQuillan said.

No other vehicles were involved.

A coroner's inquest to decide if any criminal charges are warranted will be held after the state Division of Criminal Investigation completes its review of the accident, McQuillan said.

Crews continue making progress on Calif. fire

JERSEYDALE, Calif. (AP) — Firefighters continue to make progress against a huge California forest fire that forced evacuations for thousands of people and destroyed 41 homes and other buildings near Yosemite National Park, officials said Tuesday.

Crews battling the Oak Fire in Mariposa County got a break from increased humidity levels as monsoonal moisture moved through the Sierra Nevada foothills, said a Tuesday morning report by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire.

After minimal growth Monday and overnight, the blaze had consumed more than 28 square miles of forest land, with 26% containment on Tuesday, Cal Fire said. The cause was under investigation.

"Fire crews continue providing structure defense, extinguishing hot spots, and building and improving direct fire lines," the report said.

About 6,000 residents from mountain communities were still under evacuation orders

while heavy smoke from the fire drifted more than 200 miles, reaching Lake Tahoe, parts of Nevada and the San Francisco Bay Area, officials said.

Nearly 3,000 firefighters with aircraft support were battling the blaze that erupted last Friday southwest of the park, near the town of Midpines. It exploded in size on Saturday as flames churned through tinder-dry brush and trees amid the worst drought in decades.

Numerous roads were closed, including a stretch of State Route 140 that's one of the main routes into Yosemite.

California has experienced increasingly larger and deadlier wildfires in recent years as climate change has made the West much warmer and drier over the past 30 years. Scientists have said weather will continue to be more extreme and wildfires more frequent, destructive and unpredictable.

The Oak Fire burned as firefighters also made progress against an earlier blaze

that burned to the edge of a grove of giant sequoias in the southernmost part of Yosemite. The Washburn Fire, spanning a 7.6-square-mile area,

was 87% contained on Tuesday after burning for more than two weeks and moving into the Sierra National Forest.

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