

DOC has carbon credits deal for private companies



The Department of Conservation is offering carbon credits to private companies involved in joint-venture forestry-regeneration projects.

The department has signed a deal with state-owned mining company Solid Energy for a project in a West Coast forest, and has others in the pipeline.

DOC commercial manager Harry Maher said that New Zealand's eight million hectares of conservation estate has the potential to play a significant part in reducing New Zealand's greenhouse gas emissions.

At the same time, the carbon storage capacity of native forests and soils on the conservation estate offers the department a way of making money by selling carbon credits.

In the West Coast deal, involving a 26,000ha forest north of Mokihinui in the Buller district, Solid Energy is implementing and paying for a goat-control programme which will allow the forest to regenerate. It is also monitoring increases in the forest's levels of carbon-capture.

Maher says that Solid Energy will be able to sell the carbon credits gained from any increases in carbon capture on the voluntary market.

"We've got a lot to learn yet about carbon capture, and this project is helping with that," he said.

Solid Energy says that it is too soon to say whether sufficient credits will flow out of the scheme to make it worthwhile selling, but it is very interested in the potential.

Communications manager Eammon Conaghan told Carbon News that it was far too soon to predict whether commercially viable levels of credits might be produced, but the company was keen to find out whether removing pests from native forests would significantly increase their carbon-storage capacity.