Introduction
For FY22, Seattle University (SU) budgeted $37,000 to offset its Scope 1 emissions which are directly produced by campus sources that use natural gas, gasoline, diesel fuel or fertilizer. To facilitate the selection of an initial carbon offset portfolio for Seattle University a Carbon Offset Committee was created in Fall 2021. Members of the committee are all members of the President’s Committee for Sustainability (PCS) and included: Shannon Britton (Grounds), Yolanda Ciete (CEJS), Tanya Hayes (EVST), Wes Lauer (CEEGR), Rick Moyer (Facilities Services), Ruby Ranoa ('22 ENSC), Mike Thee (MARCOM), Phillip Thompson (CEJS) and Eli Voigt (MARCOM). The committee was tasked with identifying a portfolio of offsets that would account for SU’s Scope 1 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for FY21 (Table 1) which were equivalent to 2750 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions (MTCDE).

Table 1: Seattle University’s Scope 1 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (FY18 to FY21).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scope 1 – GHG MTCDE</th>
<th>FY18</th>
<th>FY19</th>
<th>FY20</th>
<th>FY21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3084</td>
<td>3201</td>
<td>2918</td>
<td>2750</td>
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Offset Selection Criteria
The criteria for selecting offsets were originally established by the Guide to Carbon Offsets (2019) and included the PAVER framework\(^1\) (Table 2). In addition to PAVER requirements, offset projects should also be transparent and occur near the time of the GHG emissions.

Table 2: PAVER Requirements for Carbon Offsets

| Permanent – The reduction must last in perpetuity |
| Additional – The reduction would not have occurred during business as usual |
| Verified – The reduction must have been monitored and confirmed to have occurred |
| Enforceable – The reduction must be counted only once and then retired |
| Real – The reduction must have actually occurred and not as a result of flawed accounting |

It is critical that all offset projects are verified by third-party organizations that confirm that the PAVER requirements are being fulfilled. To be considered for the SU offset portfolio, the Committee recommends that projects meet the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) or the Gold Standard. Established by Verra in 2007, the VCS standard is the most widely used voluntary GHG program to independently assess and register verified carbon units\(^2\). The Gold Standard\(^3\), was established in 2003 by the World Wildlife Federation (WWF) and other international NGOs for offset projects that also intend to support sustainable development.

In addition to meeting verification standards, the selected offsets programs must also have co-benefits that go beyond reducing GHG emissions. In accordance with Laudato Si’s call for Integral

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\(^3\) https://www.goldstandard.org/about-us/vision-and-mission
Ecology and protecting creation, and in alignment with SU’s Jesuit mission of academic excellence, sustainability, and empowering leaders for a just and humane world, offset projects should offer educational opportunities; adhere to a set of additional social and ecological criteria that safeguard human rights; promote social engagement; support local and global equity; and contribute to the broader United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to verification and co-benefits, we sought to create a portfolio that balanced location, cost, project type, and fit with the SU mission.

**Proposed Offset Portfolio for FY 21 Emissions**

To identify potential offset projects, the committee contacted several offset providers that have been contracted by other universities and corporations. Using the above-defined selection criteria, the committee reviewed the many available offsets from each vendor and came to a consensus on a local forest protection project by King County and an international cookstove project with 3Degrees. Both projects meet our verification criterion, align with our mission, and have multiple co-benefits (Table 3).

**The King County Rural Forest Carbon Project** (WA State) produces carbon credits by permanently protecting threatened forests in rural parts of the county that would otherwise have been available for development or commercial timber harvest. Funds generated through the sale of carbon credits support acquisition of lands that are among the most critical conservation priorities of the region, identified through the collaborative Land Conservation Initiative. The King County project meets the VCS standard for offset verification. In terms of co-benefits, the King County Forest conservation project provides the opportunity for faculty, staff and students to visit the site, talk with program managers and incorporate the sites for hands-on learning opportunities. The project also demonstrates how offsets and other carbon mitigation efforts can occur here, close to home. In addition to providing climate benefits, protection of these forests provides a range of other benefits, including protecting critical salmon habitat, water quality and air quality benefits, and recreational opportunities.

**The Improved Cookstove Project** (Honduras) involves the distribution of fuel-efficient cook stoves to households to replace conventional firewood stoves. The cookstove project generates verified carbon units by increasing the efficiency of stoves and reducing the need for wood fuel. The cookstove project meets the Gold Standard for offset verification. In addition to being less costly than other types of offsets, improved stoves also provide critical co-benefits for the recipients, particularly for women, as the stoves can reduce fuel gathering, smoke inhalation and the associated health impacts.

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4 [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/household-air-pollution-and-health](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/household-air-pollution-and-health)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OFFSET PROJECT</th>
<th>VERIFICATION STANDARDS</th>
<th>CONSIDERATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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| King County Rural Forest Carbon Project | Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) | o Location: **Local**  
o SU Mission Relevance: **Academic Engagement** opportunity  
o Type: **Nature-based solution** (avoided deforestation or afforestation/reforestation. **Carbon storage**)  
o Co-benefits:  
  --Environmental: Reduced stormwater runoff, Enhanced water quality, (SDG 6) sustaining salmon and wildlife (SDG14), protect wildlife corridors (SDG* 15)  
  --Healthy communities: cleaner urban environment (SDG 11), Improve access to nature; carbon financing promotes land acquisition for new public parks that promote physical activity; provide shade; spaces for play, reduced air pollution, improve urban air quality (SDG 3)  
  --Protecting tree canopy and green spaces is critical to conservation for future generations (SDG 15) |
| 3Degrees - Honduran Cookstoves Project | GOLD Standard or Verified Carbon Standards (VCS) | o Cost: Lower cost range  
o Location: **International** (Honduras)  
o SU Mission Relevance: **Environmental Justice**  
o Type: **Energy** solution. **Carbon Avoidance** (no carbon storage).  
o Co-benefits:  
  --Gender Equality: empowerment of women and girls (SDG 5)  
  --Human health: reduced indoor air pollution (SDG 3)  
  --More energy efficient (SDG 7)  
  --Environmental: Reduce deforestation from fuel usage; Protect local ecosystem and wildlife habitat (SDG 15)  
  --Economic: cost and time savings for families; local employment opportunity; market creation for fuel efficient stoves (SDG 8) |

*SDG = United Nations Sustainable Development Goal*
Recommendations
By purchasing offsets, Seattle University will be carbon neutral for Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions. (We do not have Scope 2 emissions because Seattle City Light is carbon neutral.) The Carbon Offset Committee supports carbon offsets as a reasonable short-term approach to our university’s Scope 1 emissions as we develop longer term solutions and seek to address travel-related (Scope 3) emissions which account for 80 percent of our total emissions.

The Carbon Offset Committee recommends that Seattle University:

1. Establish a target date for achieving carbon neutrality that is no later than 2030\(^5\).
2. Develop a plan in FY23 to reduce our annual Scope 1 emissions to zero by eliminating the use of natural gas, gasoline, and diesel fuel by our campus operations.
3. Develop a plan in FY23 to address our Scope 3 emissions.
4. Update the university’s carbon offset portfolio between September and February each fiscal year and select projects that have co-benefits and meet VCS or GOLD Standard criteria.

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\(^5\) Based on the 2018 IPCC Report that warns we must act by 2030 to limit warming to a maximum of 1.5\(^\circ\)C.