

CHOOSING A CARBON OFFSETTING SERVICE

As you know from my previous posts, I've been tracking my environmental impact for 8 months and just last week I completed a calculation of my carbon footprint from 2016. I (and my partner) emitted 27 tons of carbon in the last year. This is 4% better than the average 2 person American household, a number we're not particularly proud of. Now I'm faced with the question what should we do about it?

The first step is to reduce our emissions in 2017. Areas of improvement include reducing car and air travel, reducing water use, and improving our heating system.

The second option for limiting our negative impact on the environment is to purchase carbon offsets. Carbon offsets are problematic, first and foremost because they allow you to pay to pollute. This perpetuates the inequality in carbon emissions. It allows big polluters (Americans) to comfort our conscience but continue our unsustainable life styles while people in poorer regions create a much smaller footprint while also participating in re-forestation projects that support the "first world's" carbon habits. This last statement doesn't do justice to the complexity of the carbon offset market, but it more or less sums up why many people will roll their eyes when you suggest carbon offsets as a solution. Other problems with carbon offsets include confirming that a project wouldn't have taken place anyway, that it actually offsets what it claims to, and that it isn't just moving emissions elsewhere. Finally, carbon isn't the only environmental problem created by our lifestyles.

So where did I land on all of this? Carbon offsets are not a solution to our environmental problem - we aren't going to be able to buy our way out of the crisis. That said, as a short-term solution to my personal environmental impact I still think they are a good idea. By committing to purchase carbon credits I am putting a price on my emissions. This introduces a new motivation to reduce my impact. For a business, I would argue the same thing. Reduce your impact as much as possible first, and then buy carbon credits, not only to offset your emissions but also to introduce an incentive to reduce even further. The truth is that carbon emissions are very poorly regulated and prices don't reflect a product's environmental impact. So compensating as best we can is the responsible thing to do.

After sorting out the ethics of carbon offsetting for myself, I had to choose a program. I looked at a few including Terra Pass and the Nature Conservancy. In the end I landed on Native Energy. Why? Because they are a B Corp! I was pleased that not only are Native Energy's carbon credits certified by Gold Standard, but the company itself is also certified by the B Lab. I can review their profile on the B Lab website and see that not only are they carrying out environmental projects, but they also treat their employees and communities well. I also know that the company has been screened for negative practices that would disqualify it as a B Corp.

After deciding on Native Energy I plugged my 27 tons of carbon emissions into the “buy carbon offsets” box and was told I should pay \$378. I’ll admit I was kind of relieved because this is in my budget, but I’m also somewhat concerned that it is so inexpensive. When I think about my overall spending for the year, \$378 isn’t a very big percentage. However, everything considered I’m pleased that I was able to track my impact, calculate my carbon, and pay to offset it. I hope I’ll do better next year!

Here’s my carbon credit certificate. I hope you’ll join me in offsetting!

This uniquely numbered certificate recognizes your participation in *NativeEnergy’s* carbon offset program.

The serial number on this certificate identifies the quantity of carbon offsets that you purchased and the project(s) that you helped finance. These offsets will be retired either to the Markit Environmental Registry or the Climate Action Reserve, ensuring that they cannot be transferred or resold.



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Thank you for supporting a carbon reduction project with *NativeEnergy!*

Founded in Vermont in 2000, *NativeEnergy* has become a leading provider of carbon offsets, renewable energy credits, and greenhouse gas consulting. We help businesses and individuals reduce their carbon emissions and build strong, sustainable brands. Our clients include pioneers in corporate social responsibility, like eBay, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Ben & Jerry’s, Interface, Stonyfield Farm, Esurance, and National Geographic.

With our Help Build™ carbon offsets, businesses and individuals can help finance the construction of wind, biogas, solar, and other carbon projects with strong social and environmental benefits. We have provided essential funding to over 50 community-based projects—our customers have brought wind turbines to schools, methane digesters to family farms, and we even helped build the first large scale Native-owned wind turbine in the U.S.

All *NativeEnergy* carbon offsets are third-party validated and verified to leading standards, and our renewable energy credits are Green-e certified. In total, we have supported more than 2.5 million tons of greenhouse gas reductions, and we have over 4 million tons under contract.

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