4.

CARBON COUNTING METHODS

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Carbon projects offer an opportunity for Indigenous land managers to leverage a source of independent revenue to support the carbon method activity. So far, this opportunity has been accessed predominantly by Indigenous groups undertaking savanna fire management in northern Australia, but there is opportunity to expand this further and around Australia.

LAND SECTOR METHODS UNDER THE ACCU SCHEME

There are many different activities you can do under the ACCU Scheme. For the land sector, the main activities under existing carbon methods are:

- Savanna fire management in northern Australia
- Putting organic matter back into the ground or changing management to store carbon in soils
- Planting seeds or seedlings to establish forests
- Establishing a new plantation forest or changing the management of an existing plantation
- Reintroducing tidal flow to coastal wetland ecosystems for blue carbon storage

LAND AND SEA METHODS IN DEVELOPMENT

New carbon methods are developed by the Australian Government through two channels: 1) Methods previously prioritised for development by the Minister (below) and 2) Proponent led methods (next page).

Priorities in 2025/26

Methods being developed through the Australian Government's Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) in 2025/26 include:

- Integrated Farm and Land Management – the method will credit abatement resulting from the planting and regeneration of native vegetation and for improvements in soils.
- Two new Savanna Fire Management Methods - these will credit abatement from fire management practices in savanna landscapes and build on the SFM 2018 methods.
  The two methods are:

  1) Emissions Avoidance only - accounting for the reduction in smoke that results from improved fire management and less wildfire.
  2) Emissions Avoidance and Sequestration - in addition to accounting for the reduction in smoke, the increase in carbon stored in the logs on the ground, in standing dead trees and living vegetation is also accounted for. This Method requires a commitment to store the carbon for 25 or 100 years.

If you wish to engage in the method co-design process, please contact ICIN.

PROPONENT-LED METHOD DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

In 2024, the Australian Government for the first time called for proposals to develop new methods under

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a new proponent-led method development process. All methods were assessed and recommended independently by the Emissions Reduction Assurance Committee - an independent committee that has been established whose role includes reviewing methods.

Four methods were selected by the Australian Government for prioritisation in late 2024, and two of these methods were supported by ICIN and will bring new opportunities to value emissions reductions by Indigenous land and sea management.

These methods are:

- The Blue Carbon (Feral Ungulate Management) Method put forward by the University of Queensland and NAILSMA. ICIN and several of its members are proud to have been involved in this research, which for the first time values the climate benefit to the soil of removing feral ungulates from coastal and freshwater floodplains. This new carbon method presents a significant opportunity for Indigenous land and sea managers, many of whom continue to grapple with the impacts of feral ungulates on their Country and develop appropriate management responses.
- Extending the Savanna Fire Management Method into the Northern Arid Zone was successfully put forward by the Indigenous Desert Alliance.
  The proposal is to extend the 2025 Savanna Fire Management Emissions Avoidance Method into the Northern Arid Zone of the NT and WA, taking in the Tanami Desert and the southern Kimberley. This will mean that Indigenous fire managers across that region will now potentially be eligible to seek to undertake a savanna fire management carbon project.

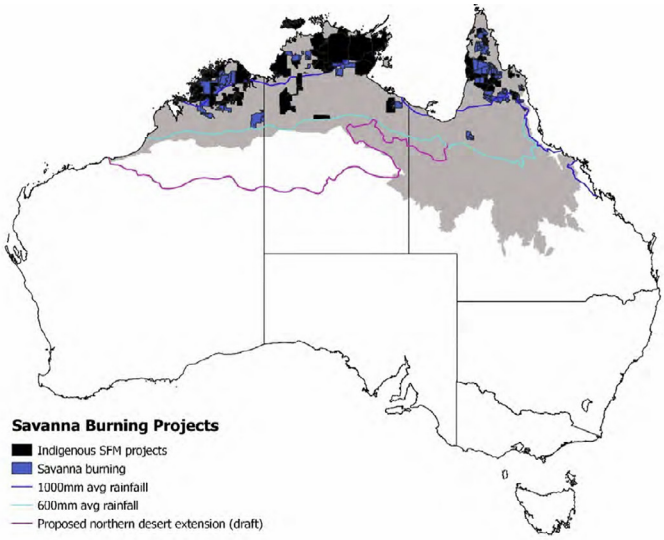
OVERVIEW OF METHODS RELEVANT TO INDIGENOUS GROUPS

All the Savanna Fire Management methods credit a reduction in the amount of fire occurring in the project compared to a business-as-usual scenario.

If you have had little fire over the last 10-15 years on your project area, or you plan to increase fire across your project area (for example to reduce woody thickening) then these Methods are not for you.

If you plan to increase fire in some areas or vegetation types, then that could be incorporated into the boundary design of your project. The frequency of fire, particularly late dry season fire, provides a good indication of where there is an opportunity to reduce fire and emissions.

This map shows active Savanna Fire Management projects, identifying both Indigenous and non-indigenous owned projects, within the Savanna Zone, as of 2022.



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Type of activity	Method name	Registered Projects[1]	Indigenous Projects[2]	Is this activity a good fit for my group?
Indigenous fire Management in Northern Australia	*Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) (Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions through Early Dry Season Savanna Burning-1.1) Methodology Determination 2013*	7	0	These methods would suit groups in Northern Australia who have an interest in improving fire management and have the ability to meet upfront costs to get a project started. It is only possible to register a project on the most current version of a Method. The 2018 version is the current version at time of publication, although a newer versions is due for release late 2025.
	Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative-Emissions Abatement through Savanna Fire Management) Methodology Determination 2015	60	26	
	Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative—Savanna Fire Management— Emissions Avoidance) Methodology Determination 2018	13	7	
	Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative—Savanna Fire Management — Sequestration and Emissions Avoidance) Methodology Determination 2018	6	4	This method wouldsuit groups in Northern Australia who can do good fire management; have strong governance and administrative capacity; and the support of Traditional Owners to carry the project in the long-term. A newer version is due for release in late 2025.

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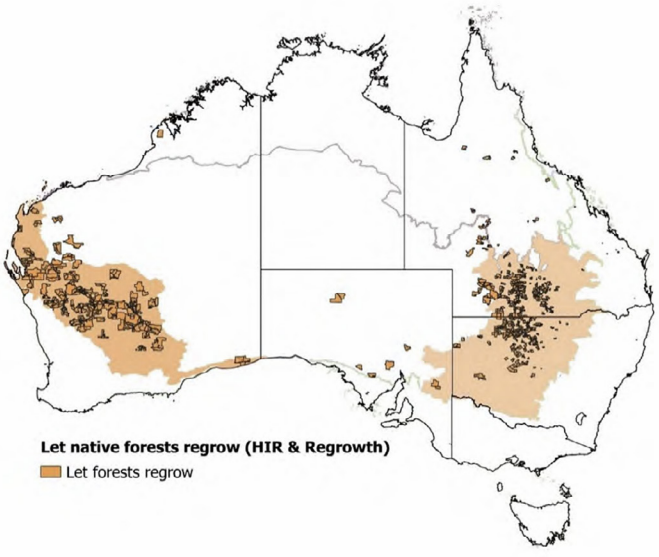
Type of activity	Method name	Registered Projects[1]	Indigenous Projects[2]	Is this activity a good fit for my group?
Allowing land to naturally regrow into forests	*Carbon Credits (CarbonFarming Initiative) (Native Forest from Managed Regrowth) Methodology Determination 2013.* *This Method expired 31 March 2024.*	35	0	Native forest regrowth projects would suit groups who want to restore the land by changing the management of land areas that currently have grazing, cropping or weeds and feral animals stopping forests from growing.Note this is a long-term sequestration project. Exisiting projects can continue, but no new projects can be registered under either of these two Methods, they have both expired (sunsetted).
	Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) (HumanInduced Regeneration ((HIR)) of a Permanent Even-Aged Native Forest—1.1) Methodology Determination 2013 (as amended - Compilations 1, 2 and 3). *This Method expired on 1 October 2023.*	459	5	

No new projects can be registered in the table above as they have expired. These Methods are about allowing land to naturally regrow back into forests by removing the suppressing agents like grazing (no direct seeding or planting is permitted).

Under these methods, you can't plant seeds or seedlings, trees must grow back naturally. You need to consider whether the trees will come back by themselves. If there are no trees at all in the area, it is unlikely a project will succeed because there is no ability for trees to self-seed.

This map shows all active 'Let native forests regrow' projects (HIR and regrowth). Most projects are registered in the Rangelands (east and west) Carbon Method Zones (displayed).

The maps in this chapter are from ICIN Mapping the Opportunities for Indigenous Carbon in Australia, with data current as of February 2022.



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Type of activity	Method name	Registered Projects[1]	Indigenous Projects[2]	Is this activity a good fit for my group?
Planting seeds or seedlings to establish forests	*Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative— Reforestation and Afforestation 2.0) Methodology Determination 2015.* *This Method is due to expire on 30 September 2025.* *Note 2013 version incl. in project stats.*	10	0	A forest planting project would suit Indigenous landholders who want to plant a forest on their land. Note this is a long-term sequestration project.
	Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) (Reforestation by Environmental or Mallee Plantings—FullCAM) Methodology Determination 2014 (as ammended, compilations 1 and 2) *This version of the Method has expired, replaced by version below.*	253	0	
	Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) (Reforestation by Environmental or Mallee Plantings-FullCAM) Methodology Determination 2024	23	0	

Forest planting projects support landowners to plant seeds or seedlings, in rows or randomly, for the purpose of establishing a forest on land that has been cleared or used for cropping or grazing, or clear of forest cover, for at least the last five years before the project is undertaken.

The trees must be able to grow and become a forest (greater than 20% canopy cover, greater than 2m tall) which does restrict the Methods to certain environmental conditions. These methods will limit your ability to harvest wood from the forest. If you want to harvest the forest (and then replant again), refer to the Farm Forestry Method discussed on the DCCEEW website.

In the past, choosing between the different tree planting methods was dependant on the land use prior to planting and the approach to monitoring. The Afforestation/Reforestation Method requires taking measurements of trees as they grow, whereas the Environmental Plantings Method uses the FullCAM model and simpler to run.

Map on next page: All active Planting Forest projects in the Agricultural (east and west) Carbon Method Zones (displayed).

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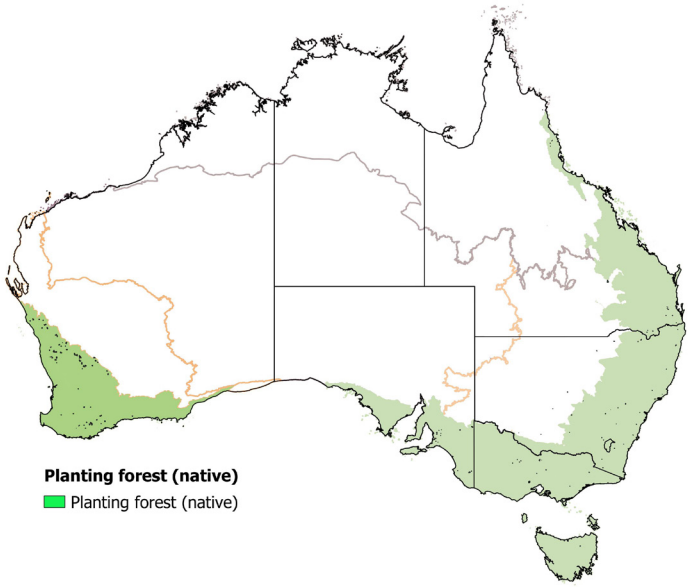
Type of activity	Method name	Registered Projects[1]	Indigenous Projects[2]	Is this activity a good fit for my group?
Removal or modification of tidal restriction mechanisms to introduce tidal flow	*Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative - Tidal Restoration of Blue Carbon Ecosystems)*	2	0	More information about this new method can be found here.

The first blue carbon method under the ACCU Scheme is about reintroducing tidal flows to areas that have been drained (for example by sea walls, bunds, cane drains or other devices that restrict tidal flows). This method looks at the impact of reintroducing tidal flows on saltmarshes and mangroves. In the future, there are likely to be more blue carbon methods, which might consider other coastal ecosystems or other types of activities.



CARBON FARMING OUTREACH PROGRAM (CFOP)

The Australian Government's CFOP, is a free online training package, which was launched in 2024 in partnership with the University of Melbourne. This training package was created to help land managers make decisions about reducing emissions and storing carbon. ICIN worked to ensure free ICIN resources, designed to support better participation of Indigenous people in Australia's carbon market, were referred to in the course.

From 2025, ICIN has been funded by DCCEEW to deliver the First Nations CFOP over the next three years. Through the program, ICIN will be supporting the design and delivery of policy consultation workshops and workshops which cover key concepts Indigenous groups may need to know if they are considering a carbon project. This project also includes the development of communication tools that will help Indigenous groups to understand carbon methods.

[1] Active projects only (does not include revoked projects).

[2] This information is based on information available to ICIN at the time of publication. ICIN acknowledges there may be some gaps in this data, which it will continue to update.

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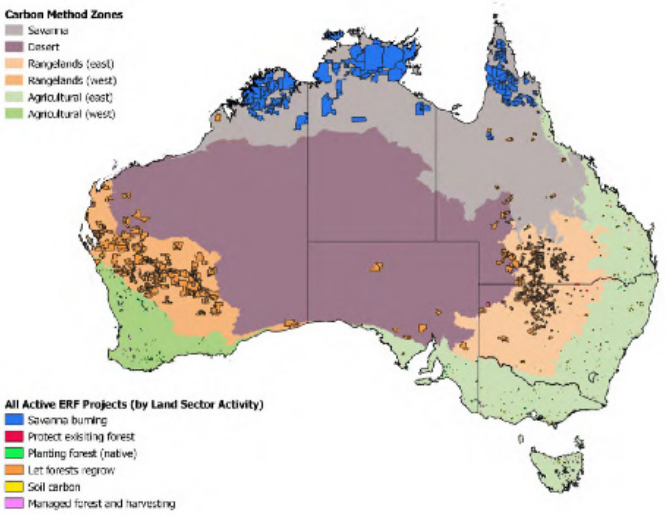

This map shows all active land sector carbon projects as of February 2022 across Australia in relation to 'Carbon Method Zones'

WHAT IS BLUE CARBON?

The term 'blue carbon' refers to the carbon that is stored in coastal and marine ecosystems, such as mangroves, salt marshes, supratidal forests (for example Melaleuca forests) and seagrass meadows.

These ecosystems capture and store carbon, and they can play an important role in fighting climate change.

The blue carbon market is based on the idea that companies and individuals can pay to offset their greenhouse gas emissions by funding projects that protect and restore coastal ecosystems.

Potential blue carbon activities include avoiding loss where there is:

- Demonstrable habitat threat
- Identified activities to mitigate

Or restoration of ecosystems through:

- Reconnection of tidal flows
- Rewetting drained wetlands, or improving the condition of wetlands (e.g., feral ungulate Method in development)
- Replanting or the regeneration of vegetation

Damage caused to the sensitive soil of wetlands by pigs
Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation

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Arafura Swamp Rangers (credit David Hancock)

By increasing the carbon that is stored in these ecosystems, these projects can generate carbon credits, which can then be traded on the carbon market. Put simply, blue carbon is an extension of existing carbon markets into coastal and marine ecosystems.

INTERNATIONAL METHODS

The ACCU Scheme is the Australian Government operated carbon market, and most Australian carbon projects operate under this Scheme. However, it is possible to undertake carbon projects in Australia under a voluntary carbon program other than the ACCU Scheme, and there are some examples of these types of projects in Australia.

A reason a project may choose a carbon program other than the ACCU Scheme include where the ACCU Scheme does not have a method applicable to the particular activity or geographic location, but there is a method available under another carbon program; or where the ACCU Scheme method is particularly complex or cost-prohibitive, and there is a less-complex or less-costly alternative available under another carbon program.

There are many voluntary carbon market programs operating internationally, such as Verra, Gold Standard and Plan Vivo. These programs all have their own carbon methods and are governed by international integrity initiatives such as the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Markets (IC-VCM). The IC-VCM measures governance, emissions impact and sustainable development.

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