

The Nature
Conservancy



Solomon Islands

The Importance of Barora Fa

Barora Fa and its surrounding islands are an area of national and international conservation importance.

Because of many decades of commercial logging in the Solomon Islands, Barora Fa is now the largest area of unlogged lowland forest in Isabel Province.

The marine environments are also very special. Barora Fa is the best example of well-flushed sheltered reef habitats and extensive mangrove environments in Solomon Islands. Indeed, Barora Fa contains 15% of all the mangrove forests in Solomon Islands.

The highly diverse yet fragile fringing lagoonal reefs of Barora Fa act as nursery grounds for numerous important food fish.

Studies in the Kia region that were led by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) have shown that these marine nursery grounds are badly affected by the sedimentation caused from commercial logging. For example, 24 times more juvenile topa were seen on healthy lagoonal reefs near the unlogged island of Barora Fa than on unhealthy lagoonal reefs near the logged island of Barora Ite.

These forests and marine environments of Barora Fa also contain many important cultural sites.

Barora Fa has been identified as a priority area of conservation in national and provincial conservation assessments, such as the Solomon Islands 2004 Marine Ecological Assessment that TNC led and in the 2012 Isabel Ridges to Reefs Conservation Plan that TNC facilitated.

What is a Carbon Project?

- ❖ A carbon project is a way for communities and landowners to say no to logging and instead make an income from protecting their forests.
- ❖ With a carbon project you don't need to take anything out of your forest. Instead, you are being paid to effectively protect, monitor, and manage the health of these forests.
- ❖ By stopping your trees from being cut down you can generate and sell carbon credits to private companies that want to compensate for some of the pollution they are causing.
- ❖ Calculating the number of carbon credits that can be sold involves measuring how much avoided pollution (carbon dioxide or CO₂) stays in a forest if it is not logged.

TIMELINE

- ❖ Developing a carbon project takes money, time and commitment.
- ❖ Some women and men would be paid to help out with the feasibility assessments.
- ❖ But it normally takes 2-3 years to set up a carbon project before carbon credits can be sold.
- ❖ The project needs to be implemented for 40 years and the carbon needs to be kept in the forest for at least 100 years.

ADVANTAGES OF A CARBON PROJECT

- ❖ A carbon project is expected to pay more income than logging, and it is paid over many years in a way that is agreed by the landowners.
- ❖ Everyone in a community (women, men, children, landowners) can benefit.
- ❖ It includes added benefits such as investment in community facilities, education or business development assistance.
- ❖ Creates job opportunities for local community members in data collection, rangers and monitoring.
- ❖ Cultural sites are not destroyed and the forest continues to provide building materials, clean water and food for local communities.
- ❖ Inshore reefs and fisheries are not damaged, providing food and incomes for future generations.

CONSIDERATIONS

- ❖ TNC could help stakeholders to build a project that meets all the necessary requirements, but the project would be owned by the landowners and community.
- ❖ Unlike logging, the community will decide how the carbon project is managed and operated, as well as how benefits are shared.
- ❖ For a carbon project to be successful, the income/benefits must be well managed and fairly shared with women and men.
- ❖ If you want to develop a carbon project, you must decide not to engage in commercial logging and instead commit to protect and manage your forest.
- ❖ Setting up a project requires working with a range of stakeholders throughout the process.
- ❖ The carbon project would be a long-term community-led venture.



Cover: Kia village, Isabel Province, Solomon Islands. © Bridget Besaw

Right: A logging road cuts through the forest in the Solomon Islands © iStock

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is active in 70+ countries and is the world's largest non-profit environmental organisation. The mission of TNC is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

TNC has been working in the Kia region of Solomon Islands since 1992 when it helped to establish the Arnavons Community Marine Conservation Area (ACMCA).

TNC believes that the forests and marine environments of Barora Fa should be protected for the benefit of future generations.

With this goal in mind, TNC is supportive of assisting in getting Barora Fa forests and surrounding marine environments established as a Protected Area.

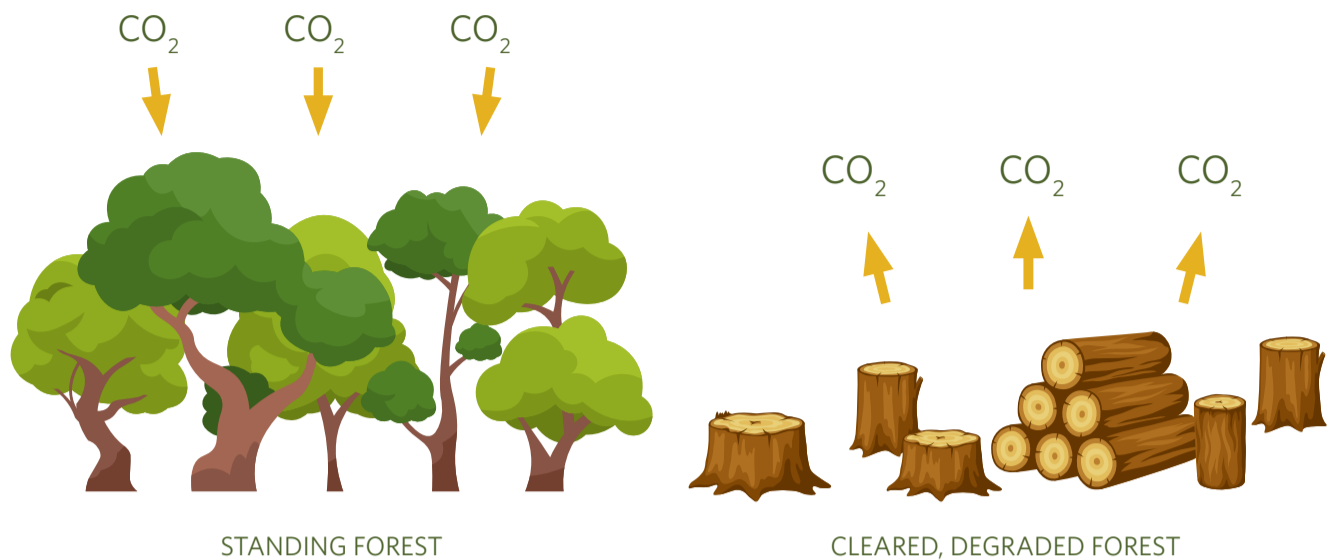
As an alternative to commercial logging, TNC can assist stakeholders with establishing a forest carbon project for the entire island of Barora Fa and surrounding unlogged islands. While carbon markets are still uncertain and carry some risks, this project could provide a long-term environmentally friendly source of benefits and income for communities.

The first step in that process would be conducting detailed feasibility assessments over the next 12 months.

TNC believes that a carefully designed carbon project could provide greater income and benefits than royalties from commercial logging and that could be more equitably shared with local women, men, children, communities, and landowners.

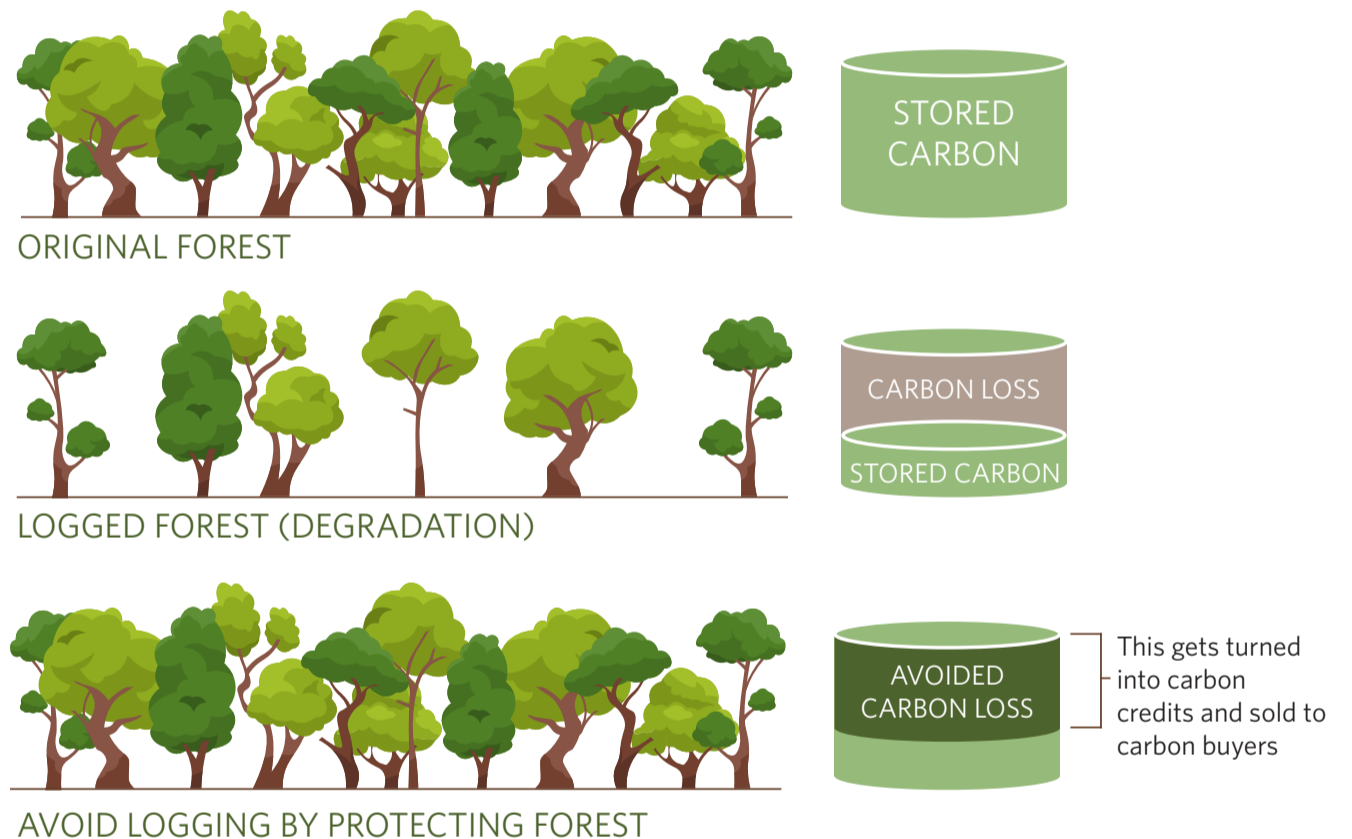
What is carbon and carbon credits?

- ❖ The wood and leaves that make up a forest store a lot of carbon. But when a forest is logged a lot of this carbon is released into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide gas. This is called carbon loss.
- ❖ If we protect forests, we stop the release of carbon dioxide (CO₂).
- ❖ Carbon dioxide is a natural gas and it is not poisonous, but globally too much of this gas is being released. This is causing our planet to warm up and is resulting in climate change.
- ❖ Every tonne of gas (1000 kg) that is not released equals one carbon credit.
- ❖ Stopping the forests of Barora Fa from being commercially logged will prevent hundreds of thousands of tonnes of carbon dioxide gas from being released.



The diagram above shows how a forest stores carbon.

Not all the stored carbon in a protected forest can be claimed towards carbon credits. It is only the carbon in trees that would have been lost because of logging. The diagram to the right shows how a carbon credit is produced.



What is needed to progress the Barora Fa forest carbon project?

- ❖ Customary landowners and communities with access rights to Barora Fa all agree to work with TNC to develop a carbon project.
- ❖ Customary landowners must be able to show clear and uncontested rights to their land, in order to prove who owns the land and the carbon.
- ❖ With support from TNC, communities and landowners develop a governance structure for managing the Barora Fa carbon project and develop an agreement on how to share money and benefits fairly with all community members (men and women).
- ❖ TNC leads a detailed assessment of the potential carbon project to ensure that it will protect the environment and provide sustainable financial benefits to communities.
- ❖ Customary owners and TNC must engage with a range of stakeholders throughout the process including government, community organisations, NGOs, small business etc.
- ❖ With support from TNC, communities and landowners create a conservation plan for Barora Fa.
- ❖ Under this conservation plan commercial harvesting of timber is not allowed. But communities can decide on what other activities they will allow, such as where gardens could be made and where timber could be harvested for community use.
- ❖ Apply to have Barora Fa established as a Protected Area. This would give legal protection against logging and mining. Applying for legal Protected Area status is important because it ensures the forest is protected for the long term.
- ❖ The land and carbon rights remain with the landowners.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is TNC experienced in developing carbon projects?

Yes. TNC has been a leader in carbon project development for nearly three decades. The first carbon project that TNC helped establish was in Belize in 1995. TNC has global and regional carbon experts that will help the TNC Solomon Islands Program with this Barora Fa project if it goes ahead.

How is TNC different from other carbon developers?

TNC is willing to seek and provide funds for early investigation into project feasibility. If the project is feasible and does go ahead, TNC would not profit from a carbon project in the future. This makes TNC very different from other carbon project developers, who would want a share in the profits generated by carbon credits.

Why does TNC want to help develop a carbon project?

TNC is a non-profit environmental organisation. TNC's motivations are addressing climate change, protecting the unique environment of Barora Fa and ensuring that the financial benefits from a carbon project are shared fairly between women and men who have a customary right to Barora Fa.

How can TNC support a carbon project at Barora Fa?

TNC can support the feasibility work needed to determine if the project is viable. We can assist with awareness, establishing the governance structures and working with communities, government and other stakeholders to agree on principles and project development needs. Once a project is determined as feasible, we can assist with the development of project design and implementation. TNC can also assist in selling the credits once they are available.

What does TNC require to support a carbon project in Barora Fa?

There are a range of requirements to establish a viable carbon project. Importantly is the need for community consent and forests must not be harvested or degraded by commercial timber extraction. A project must be established for a minimum period, which would need to be agreed by all parties. An equitable benefit sharing model would also need to be agreed upon. A project requires engagement and coordination with a broad range of stakeholders. Independent verification of the project is required for carbon credits to be delivered.

What would landowners have to do under a Carbon project?

You will be rewarded financially for the promise to protect the forest and ongoing management of the area. It will require evidence that the forest is protected through activities such as rangers, monitoring, data collection. Funds need to be set aside to undertake these activities and this needs to be managed under an agreed governance system. Regular review of these activities by TNC and external auditors will be undertaken to make sure they are occurring and the credits remain valid.

What if some Barora Fa land-owners support a carbon project, and some land-owners support logging?

A TNC supported carbon project requires the agreement of all landowners. Half the area doesn't produce half the income. The scale and size of the area of land are particularly important for establishing a viable business model that covers costs, whilst maximising community benefits.

Will land-owners and their communities receive 100% of the Carbon Project revenues?

No. Unlike logging, a carbon project is owned and managed by landowners and communities. So, they need to pay project costs to ensure long-term sustainability, before distributing the remaining revenue. This includes management costs (e.g. community rangers), fees for the certifying body, monitoring and evaluation.

A long-term financial fund to manage the area into the future may also be considered. It is also advised to allocate a percentage to government, as this will likely be needed under any future national carbon policy.

CONTACT INFORMATION

We welcome you to contact any of our team members for more information.

Peter Waldie
peter.waldie@tnc.org, 7326477

Willie Atu
watu@tnc.org, 7495762

Madlyn Ero
madlyn.ero@tnc.org, 7414465

John Pita
jpita@tnc.org 7477041

A canoe paddles at sunrise in Kia Village, Isabel Province, Solomon Islands. © Tim Calver