

What's happening in the Big Wild: Michigan's Forest Carbon Credit Marketing Project

The Pigeon River Country State Forest (Pigeon) was named the Big Wild by conservationist P. S. Lovejoy, the State's first Game Chief, in the early 1900s. The Pigeon was originally created in 1919 with 6,468 acres of tax-reverted property, and today encompasses approximately 109,000 acres, the largest block of contiguous undeveloped land in Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The Pigeon provides many unique backcountry recreational opportunities in Michigan's Lower Peninsula, located northeast of Gaylord, as well as being a working forest providing significant wildlife habitat. It is the home of Michigan's elk herd and many other wildlife species.

The Big Wild Forest Carbon Project is an innovative pilot project that will leverage the carbon storage capacity of trees on 100,000 acres in the Pigeon. Carbon storage is achieved through absorption of carbon dioxide by trees. A single tree can take in 48 pounds of carbon in a year. The carbon that the trees absorb is captured and transformed into biomass through photosynthesis. One carbon credit equals 1 metric ton of carbon dioxide emission. Through carbon credits, companies that produce carbon emissions could offset their carbon emissions by buying the State's carbon credits from the Bluesource. This allows industries to invest in forests as carbon sinks and offset their emissions. Revenues from the project will be used to enhance forest management activities.

The Department of Natural Resources has a contract with Bluesource to leverage the carbon storage capacity of trees on State land and sell the State's carbon credits starting with the Pigeon as a pilot project.

Bluesource has provided two decades of leadership in working on climate solutions focusing on three key environmental services: facilitating transactions in environmental markets, strategic and tactical advisory services, and capital formation.

A major question by conservationists is how this will change the management of the Pigeon. The Pigeon's timber and wildlife management will continue to comply with the 2007 Concept of Management and the 2013 Northern Lower Peninsula Regional State Forest Management Plan. Any management changes will require a modification to the current plans through a public review process. Bluesource does not have the authority to change management practices in the state forest.

