OCEAN ASSIST PROGRAMME

PRINCIPLES & REQUIREMENTS

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1. GLOSSARY

CDM – Clean Development Mechanism
DNSH – Do Not Significant Harm
EF – Ecological Footprint
ESG - Environmental, Social, Governance
GHG - Greenhouse Gases
ICROA - International Carbon Reduction and Offset
ILO - International Labour Organization
LCA – Life Cycle Assessment
MOAP – Manager of the Ocean Assist Programme
NDC - National Determined Contribution
OA – Ocean Assist
OAP - Ocean Assist Programme
OAU - Ocean Assist Unit
OA-VVBs - OA Validation and Verification Bodies
PA – Paris Agreement
PD – Project Developer
PDD – Project Design Document
PoAs - Programme of Activities
RCUs - Regenerative Contribution Units
RP - Regenerative Project
SDG – Sustainable Development Goal
UNFCCC - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WRF – Water Revolution Foundation
VER - Verified Emission Reduction
VPAs - Voluntary Project Activities

2. DEFINITION

Blue carbon - Activities that enhance carbon sequestration and storage in marine, coastal and water-related ecosystems, or that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, carried out over a period of at least five years.

Do Not Significant Harm principle – A principle that aims to prevent otherwise sustainable investments from having a negative impact on the environment or the society.

eCO2care Registry – A public registry, created in 2008, born as an initiative of the University of Genoa, Italy, to foster the role of academic institutions in addressing climate crisis and managed by Tetis Institute, a spin-off recognized by the University of Genoa. The eCO2care Registry is publicly available on the official eCO2care Website (www.eco2care.org).

Ecological Footprint - According to LCA methodology, the Ecological Footprint is an impact category that measures the biologically productive land and sea area needed to provide the resources used and to absorb the emissions generated by a product, process, or activity. It is expressed in square meters (m^2) or hectares (ha).

LCA - Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) is a methodology for assessing the environmental impacts associated with all stages of a product's, process's, or service's life cycle - from raw material extraction to production, use, and end-of-life. The method is standardized under ISO 14040–14044.

Manager of the Ocean Assist Programme - The authority responsible for issuing, updating, and interpreting the Requirements of the Ocean Assist Program. It has the authority to make changes, clarifications, or corrections with immediate effect and to publish them on the official eCO2care Registry. MOAP is also responsible for recognizing elements from other international standards or mechanisms (e.g., UNFCCC, CDM, ICROA) as valid evidence to demonstrate compliance with specific program Requirements. Project Developers are required to regularly consult the website to stay updated and to correctly apply the most recent version of the rules. MOAP is the program operator.

Ocean Assist Programme– A WRF's investment mechanism for ocean conservation supporting nature-based solutions to mitigate ecological impacts targeted at the superyacht community.

Ocean Assist Unit - A quantifiable metric unit representing regenerative contributions across carbon, ecological dimension in land and/or water domains. Each OAU is composed of 1 Regenerative Contribution Unit (RCU) and **23** Carbon Credit (VER - Verified Emission Removal), reflecting a dual investment in both climate and ecological restoration. OAUs are generated through validated and verified Regenerative Projects (RPs), which implement nature-positive interventions in line with the Ocean Assist Programme (OAP) requirements. The OAU enables the standardized accounting of the positive impacts achieved through these projects.

Permanent carbon removals – Removals that capture and store atmospheric or biogenic carbon for several centuries (e.g. direct air capture with storage) or carbon storage activities that capture and store carbon in long-lasting products for at least 35 years.

Project developer - The individual or entity responsible for initiating, implementing, and managing a Regenerative project.

Regenerative Contribution Unit (RCU) – A quantified unit representing the ecological and climate co-benefits generated by a Regenerative Project (RP), beyond carbon removal alone. RCUs account for the restoration, protection, and enhancement of ecosystems across marine, coastal, and terrestrial domains, and are assessed through standardized indicators such as biodiversity improvement, habitat quality, and ecosystem functionality, indicators from ANNEX I.

Regenerative projects – "Nature Positive" Projects, which, at the same time, enhance ecological condition and carbon removal, and have a positive or neutral impact (according to the DNSH principle) on soil (e.g. restore soil) and water (e.g. increase the availability of clean and safe water), thus quantitatively contributing to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 13, 14 and/or 15. Regenerative projects must also have a positive climate contribution.

Stakeholder consultation - Processes involving stakeholder identification, engagement, disclosure of information, consultation and participation, monitoring, evaluation of feedback and, addressing grievances, throughout the project life.

Stakeholder - Individuals, groups or institutions that have a stake, or an interest in the project activity – that may be affected by it (either positively or negatively) or they may have an interest in it and be in a position to influence its outcomes – such as local communities, Indigenous Peoples, civil society organizations, and private sector entities, comprising women, men, girls and boys.

3. FRAMEWORK

This document provides the framework for the description of Ocean Assist Units (OAUs), certified units issued under the Ocean Assist Programme (OAP).

The regenerative approach is based on the 3R (REDUCE – REMOVE – REPAIR) pathway[1].

REDUCE	Companies shall demonstrate to have mitigation strategies, net-zero targets and decarbonisation pathways, showing efforts to design green products and services
REMOVE	Companies shall promote carbon dioxide removals, whether in underground geological storage or through management practices in the land use
REPAIR	Companies shall support regenerative projects designed to restore and repair parts of the damaged climate systems through investment in regenerative projects, enhancing biodiversity and generating positive climate impacts

The present OAP regulates the phase **REPAIR** of the framework.

The Ocean Assist Programme (OAP) has been developed in response to the urgent need to move beyond compensatory approaches and embrace a regenerative paradigm for addressing ecological degradation. The Programme recognizes that biodiversity restoration is the central pillar of lasting environmental recovery, while climate contributions represent a critical co benefit of actions aimed at rebuilding the integrity of natural systems.

The OAP establishes a structured and verifiable framework for quantifying and certifying regenerative interventions through the issuance of Ocean Assist Units (OAUs). Each OAU integrates two complementary components:

- 1 Regenerative Contribution Unit (RCU), measuring net ecological gains in terms of both extent and condition (expressed in "quality hectares"), and
- 23 Verified Emission Reductions (VERs), corresponding to the certified removal of 23 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent.

By adopting this dual metric approach, the OAP anchors climate contributions within a biodiversity centered model, ensuring that carbon removals are intrinsically linked to the restoration of

[1] Del Borghi A., Gallo M., Gagliano E., Eleuteri V. (2023): Regenerative development model: a life cycle-based methodology for the definition of Regenerative Contribution Units (RCU). Sustainability 2023,15

ecosystem functions, habitat quality, and resilience. In doing so, it positions climate action as an integral co benefit of biodiversity regeneration, rather than a stand alone objective.

The fixed number of VERs relates to 1 Regenerative Contribution Unit (RCU), designed to certify a positive contribution to ecological footprint, reflecting the enhancement of ecosystem functions, biodiversity, and resilience in a measurable area of intervention. In parallel, a fixed number of Carbon Credits (Verified Emission Reductions – VERs), set at 23 units, is associated with each RCU to reflect a quantifiable climate benefit, specifically the removal of 23 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent, according to the specifications reported in Annex III - Reference Framework for VER Allocation Based on Marine Ecological Footprint.

This Programme is designed for entities — including but not limited to those within the marine and maritime sectors — seeking to integrate Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations into their operations and to demonstrate verifiable progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, every OAU supports SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and/or SDG 15 (Life on Land), with an inherent contribution to SDG 13 (Climate Action) as a measurable and complementary outcome.

All projects generating OAUs are subject to independent validation and verification by accredited bodies in accordance with ISO 14065 and ISO 17029, and are registered in the public eCO_2care Registry, ensuring transparency, traceability, and integrity throughout the project cycle.

The Ocean Assist Programme thereby offers a science based, market relevant mechanism to foster corporate regenerativeness, providing a pathway for organizations to actively support nature positive solutions. Through this Programme, biodiversity recovery becomes the primary driver of action, and climate mitigation emerges as a co benefit of restoring the natural systems on which both people and economies depend.

In embracing this approach, the Ocean Assist Programme offers the maritime sector more than a tool for compliance — it provides a pathway to leadership. By participating, companies and individuals contribute to a regenerative future, where oceans are not just preserved but actively repaired, and where the act of navigating our seas becomes part of a larger commitment to safeguarding them.

3.1. GOVERNANCE

Scheme Governance

The Ocean Assist Programme (OAP) is owned and maintained by Water Revolution Foundation (WRF), with scientific and technical support from Tetis Institute Srl. The governance of the programme is delegated to the MOAP (Manager of the Ocean Assist Programme), which is responsible for:

(a) Issuing and updating technical and procedural requirements;
(b) Maintaining the official version of the standard and publishing updates;
(c) Accrediting Validation and Verification Bodies (VVBs);
(d) Ensuring impartiality, transparency and traceability of issued units;
(e) Managing potential conflict of interest through third-party oversight;

(f) Handling complaints and appeals through a formal procedure described on the eCO2care Registry[2].

The governance structure ensures independence between verification activities, vaidation and programme ownership, in compliance with ISO 14065 and ISO 17029.

Complaint and Appeal Procedure

For Complaint and Appeal it is possible to contact the MOAP through the eCO2care Registry through an informative form. Any stakeholder, project proponent or third party may file a complaint regarding the conduct of the programme, decisions made by MOAP, or any issue of potential conflict of interest.

Programme Classification

The Ocean Assist Programme does not qualify as a GHG Programme according to the ISO 14064-3 definition, but it is considered as a Regenerative Programme and it represents a voluntary, third-party-governed framework for the registration and certification of climate contributions through GHG removals and emission reductions in nature-based regenerative projects.

4. Regenerative Market and Target Audience

4.1.1 The term regenerative market in the context of this Programme refers to a system in which economic activities are designed not only to reduce harm, but to actively restore and enhance marine and coastal ecosystems, while delivering measurable climate benefits through carbon removals and ecosystem services. This concept goes beyond traditional carbon markets by integrating principles of ecological restoration and long-term environmental stewardship. his concept differs from traditional carbon markets. It does not rely on compensation mechanisms or offsetting, but rather on contribution-based approaches that generate additional, measurable environmental and social benefits. It integrates ecological and social co-benefits (e.g., biodiversity recovery, community engagement), not only carbon accounting. It requires that all credited activities contribute to both climate and ecological targets.

4.1.2 A regenerative programme, such as the OAP, is primarily aimed at engaging marine and maritime stakeholders—such as shipowners, port operators, and the yachting industry—but is also open to the participation of other relevant actors, including public institutions, NGOs, coastal communities, and research entities. Within this framework, companies play the role of investors and users of Ocean Action Units (OAUs), leveraging them for environmental, reputational, and ESG benefits. Project Developers, on the other hand, are the actors who design, implement, and monitor Regenerative Projects, ensuring alignment with the Programme's ecological and climate integrity requirements. These actors can contribute to, invest in, or benefit from Ocean Action Units (OAUs),

[2] All official documentation, updates, templates and contact information are available on the eCO2care registry (www.eco2care.org)

ensuring a broad and inclusive approach to scaling nature-based climate solutions.

4.1.3 The objective of this Programme is to support the transition towards a regenerative market, combining ecological restoration and GHG removals through the generation and exchange of Ocean Action Units (OAUs), which integrate Restoration Credit Units (RCUs) and Verified Emission Reductions (VERs). The name "Ocean Action Units" reflects the Programme's focus on climate and nature-positive contributions specifically designed for the marine and maritime sectors. These sectors and actors —such as shipowners, the yachting industry, and related stakeholders—represent the primary target audience and intended investors of OAUs, as they are well-positioned to support, finance, and benefit from ocean-based solutions that deliver both environmental and reputational value.

4.1.4 Within the Programme, a clear distinction is made between two main categories of actors: Project Developers and OAU Buyers. Project Developer are individuals or entities responsible for the design, implementation, and monitoring of regenerative interventions that generate RCUs. These actors ensure that projects meet all eligibility, methodological, and verification requirements, contributing directly to ecological restoration and carbon removal. OAU Buyers are individuals, companies or institutions—such as shipowners, yacht builders, port operators, or other maritime stakeholders—that purchase OAUs to contribute to climate and nature-positive goals. These actors may use OAUs to support voluntary climate contributions, improve ESG performance, or communicate environmental leadership, but are not necessarily involved in the direct execution of regenerative projects

4.1.5 No direct involvement in project development is required to obtain certification.

5. GENERAL OVERVIEW

5.1.1 The Ocean Assist Programme (OAP) is a science-based initiative built on a robust and transparent methodology that integrates certified carbon credits with Regenerative Contribution Units (RCUs). The Programme is designed to generate high-integrity, traceable climate and ecological contributions by combining the measurable impact of carbon offsetting with the broader value of regenerative practices in marine, coastal and transitional or terrestrial ecosystems. Through the protection, regeneration, and monitoring of habitats, ranging from oceanic and coastal zones to riparian and land-based ecosystems, the OAP contributes to climate change mitigation, biodiversity enhancement, and ecosystem resilience. It quantifies both the carbon sequestered and the co-benefits—such as improved habitat quality, species recovery, and ecological regeneration—into unified and verifiable units.

5.1.2 The regenerative approach outlined in the OAP is founded on reinvesting in ecosystems conservation through a dedicated support mechanism that includes carbon credits but also goes beyond, introducing metrics to support regenerative projects that move beyond offsetting towards meaningful climate contributions.

5.1.3 Embracing the concept of climate contributions instead of carbon offsetting, there is the need of putting metrics beyond the regenerative development model, quantifying climate contributions at least in terms of ecological and carbon footprint and finding a method to balance these impacts with an equivalent amount of climate contributions, regenerated ecosystems, land and water.

5.1.4 Moreover, in the contributive approach, balancing GHG emissions cannot be considered comprehensive, as all footprints shall be assessed and balanced by regenerative projects contributing not only to carbon removal, but also to the regeneration of ecosystems, land and water.

5.1.5 So, regenerative projects are intended as "nature positive", which, enhance ecosystems condition and have e positive or neutral impact on carbon removal thus quantitatively contributing to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 13 and 14, or 15.

5.1.6 To quantitatively account the benefits of regenerative projects, the OAP introduces the definition of Ocean Assist Units (OAUs) that could be making quantitative assessment of regenerative development.

5.1.7 Each **Ocean Assist Unit (OAU)** represents the combination of:

- **1 regenerative contribution (1 RCU)**, which includes indicators regarding climate contribution and indicators derived from ecosystem regeneration and/or restoration, and
- **A fixed number of Carbon Credits (VERs) equal to 23 for each purchased RCU** from high-quality certified projects.

5.1.8 All RPs must demonstrate a **positive climate contribution**—meaning the amount of carbon sequestered must exceed the emissions generated by the restoration activities. Calculated as:

Net CO_2 Sequestration (RP) = Carbon Sequestration + Project Emissions

Project Emissions must be reported with a negative sign, while carbon removals must be reported with a positive sign. This convention ensures that the overall climate contribution results in a positive balance when removals exceed emissions.

This mechanism ensures that the climate value embedded in each contributes to the regenerative component by actively reducing atmospheric carbon, rather than merely compensating for emissions.

5.1.9 Acceptable VERs for the generation of an Ocean Assist Unit must be compliant with the scope of the present Programme and, as such, must come from restorative Nature-Based (NB) carbon removal projects. A non-exhaustive list of eligible projects focusing on ecosystem restoration with carbon sequestration benefits:

- Mangrove, Salt Marsh, and Seagrass Meadow Restoration (Removing barriers to tidal flow, replanting native species, erosion protection)
- Restorative Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) (Establishment or expansion of MPAs to protect carbon-rich ecosystems like: whales population,
- Macroalgae or Seaweed Habitat Restoration (Restoration of Posidonia Oceanica or native kelp forests to boost biomass carbon)

- Afforestation & Reforestation on Degraded Lands (Restoration of native forests on lands affected by logging, fires, or erosion)
- Soil Restoration for Carbon Sequestration (Regenerative agriculture, erosion control, reintroduction of native groundcover on degraded cropland)
- Peatland and Wetland Rewetting (Blocking drainage, rewetting to restore anaerobic conditions and suppress emissions)
- Grassland/Savanna Restoration (Grazing exclusion, native species reintroduction, erosion control to rebuild soil carbon stocks)

6. SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

6.1.1 The Principles & Requirements set out in this document are applicable to all OA activities - including projects, PoAs (Programme of Activities) and their Voluntary Project Activities (VPAs) - for which OA compliance is requested. It also represents the Requirements against which OA Validation and Verification Bodies (OA-VVBs) shall Validate and Verify the Project, in conjunction with any applicable Conformity Criteria.

6.1.2 The manager of the OAP is MOAP.

6.1.3 The public registry of the OAP is the eCO2care Registry, more details in chapter 7.7.

6.1.4 The Requirements shall be applied as per the relevant sections contained within this document and those associated or referenced.

6.1.5 At any time MOAP may issue updates, changes, clarifications, or corrections to the Requirements with immediate effect. All the update version of the relevant documentation shall be published to the eCO2care Registry. It is the responsibility of the Project Developer to remain up to date and to apply all such updates as required for its Project by checking the updated rules section in the eCO2care Registry, regardless of whether a notification of change has been received.

6.1.6 In some cases, MOAP may allow elements from other Standards, Guidelines, mechanisms (e.g. UNFCCC – CDM - ICROA), to be considered as evidence that can be used to demonstrate conformity to specific Requirements. However, when these elements include units or credits (e.g. carbon credits) originally issued under third-party mechanisms, such credits must be retired or cancelled within the issuing registry before being recognized by MOAP.

This is to ensure that there is no double counting or double claiming of environmental benefits, and to maintain consistency with the principles of transparency, additionality, and environmental integrity.

6.1.7 The scope of the present Programme is not for Carbon Credits Markets but the generation of OAUs combining regenerative practices (as defined for RPs) for the generation of RCUs and VERs purchase.

7. OCEAN ASSIST REQUIREMENTS

7.1.1 The OAP, based on OAU, foresees an investment in the following two assets: RCU - Regenerative Contribution Units and VER - Carbon Credits.

7.1.2 One OAU is obtained purchasing the following assets:

(a) **REGENERATIVE CONTRIBUTION UNITS = 1 RCU**

(b) **CARBON CREDITS = 23 VER (1 ton CO_2 eq each)**

1 RCU + 23 VERs-> 1:23= 1 OAU

7.1.3 RCUs are generated by Regenerative Projects (RPs), nature positive projects, which, at the same time, enhance carbon removal and ecosystems conditions.

7.1.4 VERs shall be purchased from projects registered within the eCO2care Registry or in other international registries and selected by a scientific committee according to RPs requirements as set by the present Programme. To ensure environmental integrity and avoid double counting, all VERs must be fully retired or cancelled in their original issuing registry prior to being accounted for under this Programme.

7.1.5 The retirement must be supported by verifiable documentation, including public registry transaction records. This is in line with international best practices, including those outlined by the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (ICVCM) and the Core Carbon Principles (CCPs).

7.1.6 Companies aiming to obtain OAP Certificate ("regenerative certificate") shall follow the following steps:

(a) Calculation of its own EF (m^2 or ha) with an LCA approach
(b) Selection of RPs in the OAP section of the eCO2care Registry.
(c) Purchasing of a number of RCUs equivalent to the EF calculated in a)
(d) Purchasing of an equivalent quantity of VERs (ratio 1:23 with RCUs purchased in c).
(e) Release of the OAP certificate from once the regenerative cycle is complete.

To obtain the OAP Certificate, a company must follow the process defined above. First, it calculates its own ecological footprint (in square meters or hectares). Based on this, the company chooses one or more Regenerative Projects (RPs) listed in the OAP section of the eCO_2care Registry. It then purchases RCUs corresponding to the selected projects. In addition to the RCUs, the company is required to purchase Verified Emission Reductions (VERs) in a fixed ratio of 1:23 compared to the number of RCUs acquired. Once all these steps are completed and the regenerative cycle is fulfilled, the OAP Certificate is issued, formally recognizing the company's contribution to ecological restoration and carbon removal.

8. REGENERATIVE PROJECTS

8.1 COMPLIANCE

8.1.1 Regenerative Projects (RPs) are OA Compliant Project.

8.1.2 OA Compliant Project status is achieved by successfully undergoing Validation and Verification, which means:

(a) The projects shall be validated and verified by an accredited, approved third party VVB (OA-VVB). The OA-VVB are accredited by the MOAP and a list of the accredited VVB shall be available on eCO2care Registry.

(b) A validated project is registered on the eCO2care Registry the OA section, after a formal check by eCO2care administrators.

8.1.3 All registered projects are listed on the eCO2care Registry and are publicly and transparently available.

8.2 APPLICABILITY

8.2.1 All RPs shall apply the Principles & Requirements of MOAP (chapter 7.4 and 7.5) and any associated documents.

8.2.2 All RPs shall also apply Methodologies and Specific Requirements related to the project category – unless stated otherwise.

8.2.3 If no Methodologies or Specific Requirements exist for the proposed project category, then the Project Developer can develop a new Methodology according to the Requirements set by this document. This Methodology shall be approved by the MOAP.

8.3 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

8.3.1 The following general Eligibility Criteria applies to all RPs:

(a) **Types of Projects:** Eligible projects shall include physical action/implementation on the ground or in waterbodies. Pre-identified eligible project types are identified in the Eligibility Principles and Requirements section. Examples are provided in chapters 7.5.5 and 7.5.6.

(b) **Location of Project:** Projects may be located in any part of the world.

(c) **Project Area, Project Boundary and Scale:** The Project Area and Project Boundary shall be defined. Projects may be developed at any scale although certain rules, requirements and limitations may apply under Specific Requirements.

(d) **Host Country Requirements:** Projects shall be in compliance with applicable

Host Country's legal, environmental, ecological and social regulations.

(e) **Contact Details:** As part of the Project Documentation the Project Developer shall provide (i) name and (ii) contact details of all Project Participants; AND in case of an organization (iii) the legal registration details and (iv) documentation by the governing jurisdiction that proves that the entity is in good standing (defined as being a legal or other appropriate entity registered in or allowed to operate within the required jurisdiction and with no evidence of insolvency or legal/criminal notices placed against it or any of its Directors). The MOAP retains the right (at its own discretion) to refuse the use of the OAP where reputational concerns are highlighted.

(f) **Legal Ownership:** Full and uncontested legal ownership of any commodities that are generated under the OAP (e.g. OAU) shall be demonstrated. Where such ownership is transferred from project beneficiaries this must be demonstrated formally and transparently and with full, prior and informed consent.

(g) **Other Rights:** As well as legal title and ownership, the Project Developer shall also demonstrate where required uncontested legal rights and/or permissions concerning changes in use of other resources required to service the Project (e.g. access rights, water rights). Any known disputes or contested rights must be declared immediately to the MOAP by the Project Developer and resolved prior to further project implementation in affected areas.

8.3.2 To avoid **double counting** the project shall not be included in any other voluntary or compliance standards/programme, including units used to achieve Country's National Determined Contributions (NDCs) according to Article 6 of the Paris Agreement (PA), and its area shall not overlap with that of another voluntary or compliance standard programme of a similar nature.

8.3.3 To achieve OA compliance, all Projects shall contribute to the regenerative development model, applied specifically through the following Eligibility Principles and Requirements.

8.4 PRINCIPLES

8.4.1 RPs shall be designed to restore the damaged climate systems, demonstrating their contribution to regenerative development.

8.4.2 As a market approach based on credits by projects reducing emissions, even if additional, is not enough, RPs shall enhance carbon uptake, thus removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

8.4.3 RPs are nature positive projects, which, at the same time, enhance carbon removal and ecosystems condition, and have a positive or neutral impact (according to the DNSH principle) on soil (e.g. restore soil) and water (e.g.) (increase the availability of clean and safe water).

8.4.4 RPs shall be relevant and eligible under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) bond criteria, particularly in relation to the following SDGs: SDG 13: Climate Action, SDG 14: Life below water, SDG 15: Life on Land.

8.4.5 Eligible projects shall demonstrate their additionality and permanence (chapter 7.5). A RP should deliver conservation gains over and above what is already taking place or planned.

8.5 REQUIREMENTS

8.5.1 RPs shall successfully follow the following requirements and procedures:

(a) RPs shall be of a type pre-identified as eligible or shall demonstrate their eligibility, in terms of contribution to regenerative development.

(b) RPs shall define their Baseline Scenario and Project Scenario.

(c) The Project shall include the above points in its Project Documentation, including the Monitoring & Reporting Plan.

(d) Buffer for Non-Permanence Risks: To address potential risks of non-permanence (e.g., ecosystem degradation, natural disturbances, or project failure), a buffer is applied. This buffer is a conservative share of credits withheld from issuance and placed into a shared reserve, which acts as a safeguard to ensure the environmental integrity of the system.

(a) ELIGIBLE PROJECT TYPES

8.5.2 Eligible RPs consists of two main contributions: Climate and Ecological contributions.

8.5.3 RPs shall quantitatively and separately demonstrate its climate and ecological contribution.

8.5.4 Eligible **RPs** are those coherent to both:

(a) SDGs 13, i.e. projects removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. To be considered removed, CO_2 must be captured from the atmosphere, stabilized, and stored permanently (i.e. permanent carbon removal), water (sea, lagoon,…).

(b) SDGs 15, i.e projects increasing biodiversity and regenerating soil, and/or to SDGs 14, i.e. protect and restore water-related ecosystems and coastal and marine areas.

8.5.5 Example of Ecological contributions of RPs could be:

(a) water-related areas restoration (including oceans, seas, wetlands, rivers, aquifers, and lakes and coastal areas)
(b) aquatic ecosystem restoration (e.g. seagrass, mangroves, posidonia oceanica,…)
(c) aquatic protected areas (e.g. marine protected areas, important marine mammal areas).

(d) terrestrial ecosystem restoration, in line with SDG 15 (Life on Land), including reforestation, afforestation, and agroforestry projects in degraded or deforested areas. (including: restoration of native forest ecosystems to support carbon capture and biodiversity corridors; regenerative agriculture practices to rebuild soil health and prevent desertification)

(e) biodiversity corridors and habitat connectivity, improving ecological integrity across landscapes (including: creation or rehabilitation of biological corridors that connect fragmented habitats to support species migration and genetic flow in forested or mountainous areas)

(f) land-based protected areas, (e.g. national parks, biosphere reserves, and community-managed conservation zones that contribute to the preservation of terrestrial biodiversity hotspots)

8.5.6 Examples of supplementary climate contributions of RPs could be:

(a) blue carbon (e.g. carbon storage in lagoon valley, seagrass)

(b) carbon farming (e.g. soil organic carbon enhancement on abandoned or degraded agricultural land)

(c) degraded forest landscape restoration

(d) grassland and savannah rehabilitation

8.5.7 RPs referring to the sector listed above are automatically eligible.

8.5.8 Each RP shall define its primary ecological contribution and then climate contribution, that shall be:

- both positive contributions.

8.5.9 Moreover, eligible RPs shall have:

- positive contributions or at least neutral (according to the DNSH – Do Not Significant Harm principle) on soil (e.g., restore soil) and water (e.g. increase the availability of clean and safe water).

8.5.10 For Project types that are not automatically eligible according to the list defined above, a Project Developer shall demonstrate how the Project would contribute to the regenerative development.

8.5.11 Eligibility must be Validated by the VVB.

(b) BASELINE AND PROJECT SCENARIOS

8.5.12 The Project shall define both the Baseline and Project Scenarios. These are defined as follows:

(a) **Baseline Scenario:** The Baseline Scenario is defined as the reasonable, conservative scenario that would exist in the absence of the project. While setting the Baseline Scenario, the Project Developer shall consider the relevant

applicable legislation and how effectively these are enforced. The baseline scenario is defined through the quantification of the initial ecological condition (calculated according to Annex I) and carbon sequestration potential (evaluated according to Annex II).

(b) **Project Scenario:** The Project Scenario is defined as the scenario that will exist once the Project is implemented and operational.

8.5.13 The defined Baseline and Project Scenarios shall be included in the project documentation.

8.5.14 Multiple baseline scenarios may be defined, depending on the different SDGs contributions.

8.5.15 All potential scenarios must be Validated by the VVB and the actual scenario must be chosen before the first Verification.

(c) REGENERATIVE CONTRIBUTION

8.5.16 All RPs shall demonstrate a clear, direct contribution to sustainable development, defined as making demonstrable, measurable, contribution on SDG 13 (intended as Carbon Removal) and to SDG 15 and/or to SDG 14.

8.5.17 RPs shall identify the potential SDG contribution provided by the Project by comparing the Project Scenario to the Baseline Scenario. The SDG contribution shall be demonstrated as making a positive effect beyond what would reasonably be expected to occur in the Baseline Scenario ("Nature Positive").

8.5.18 RPs shall identify the relevant monitoring indicators and/or monitoring parameters (defined in Annex I and Annex II) and define the monitoring approach in the Project Design Document to be used for the future Monitoring Reports.

8.5.19 To demonstrate SDG impacts, for each SDG the Project Developer shall review the SDG targets and indicators from the relevant National SDG Indicators, or in their absence, the latest internationally adopted version or the latest version 'under consideration' where indicators are not yet fully adopted. The Project Developer shall select the most relevant SDG targets and indicators to the chosen SDGs or propose indicators with justification and information that, when combined, demonstrate how the Project positively impacts the chosen SDGs and corresponding targets.

8.5.20 If relevant, to demonstrate SDG contribution, SDG targets and indicators shall refer to indigenous peoples' development and have direct linkages to the human rights commitments in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or the ILO Convention 169 on indigenous and tribal peoples' rights.

(d) STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

8.5.21 The objective of the stakeholder consultation and engagement process is:

i. to identify, engage and consult stakeholders in a meaningful manner to improve project design and its outcomes

ii. to inform stakeholders about the projects and discuss their likely impacts (both positive and negative) during the design, planning and implementation stage and relevance to stakeholders

iii. to establish an ongoing engagement process for stakeholders to provide input, feedback and to raise concerns throughout the project life.

8.5.22 The stakeholder consultation shall be conducted before the start date of the Project (See f – PROJECT START DATE) as a physical/online meeting or through a documental consultation.

8.5.23 The Project Developer shall identify and invite all relevant (local, affected and interested) stakeholders for consultations and comments.

8.5.24 The project developer shall share the updated project documentation with stakeholders for thirty days through the eCO2care Registry.

8.5.25 The Project Developer shall provide evidence that invitations were sent and comments were invited from the relevant stakeholders.

8.5.26 The project developer shall provide feedback to the stakeholders on how comments received have been considered in the design and implementation of the project.

(e) CREDITING PERIOD

8.5.27 RPs have 10-year crediting periods, twice renewable, for a total maximum length of 30 years.

8.5.28 Baseline must be reassessed every 10 years.

8.5.29 Monitoring period must be at least 20 years.

8.5.30 The buffer level equals to 20%. For all RPs, the buffer level is set at 20%, meaning that 20% of the RCUs are retained and not immediately claimable. This approach is aligned with best practices adopted in other nature-based standards and ensures that any unintended reversal or underperformance can be compensated.

(f) PROJECT START DATE

8.5.31 RP start date is the earliest date on which the Project Developer has committed to expenditures related to the implementation of the Project. This does not include the purchase or option to purchase the land/site upon which a Project is intended to take place.

8.5.32 Examples of the start date may include the date on which contracts have been signed

for equipment or construction/operation services required for the Project. Minor pre-project expenses, such as the contracting of services/payment of fees for feasibility studies or preliminary surveys, shall not be considered in the determination of the start date as they do not necessarily indicate the starting of the Project. For distributed technology projects, the start date is the date of implementation of the first unit under the project.

8.5.33 The project start date and the stakeholder consultation date define the project as:

(a) Regular Projects, for which the Stakeholder Consultation has been conducted before the Project Start Date.

(b) Retroactive Projects, for which the Stakeholder Consultation is conducted after the Project Start Date.

(g) ADDITIONALITY

8.5.34 Eligible RPs shall demonstrate their additionality and permanence and shall be monitored and verified by third-party independent verifiers. A RP should deliver conservation gains over and above what is already taking place or planned.

8.5.35 All RPs must demonstrate benefits that are additional as compared to their baseline scenario (i.e. the benefits of the project are beyond a business-as-usual scenario), meaning that their contribution in terms of carbon removal and sustainable development are beyond those that would have occurred in the absence of the regenerative project. In particular, a regenerative project should deliver conservation gains over and above what is already taking place or planned.

8.5.36 Additionality can be assessed by demonstrating that the proposed activities could feasibly enhance ecosystems condition, considering for example the broader economic and demographic trends, the landscape context (e.g. ecosystem connectivity), and the current level of protection of the proposed site. A number of tools can be used to inform this process, including biodiversity maps, spatial plans, and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.

8.5.37 Additionality shall be demonstrated for at least a contribution (climate and/or ecological), following guides and tools known at international or national level, such as:

a) **UNFCCC-approved additionality tool:** the latest version of the CDM "Methodological Tool - Demonstration of additionality of small- scale project activities".

b) **New additionality tools:** New approaches for additionality demonstration may be submitted to MOAP for consideration and must be Validated by the VVB.

(h) PROGRAMMES OF ACTIVITY (PoA)

8.5.38 RPs might be also deemed in view of Program of Activities (PoA), intended as the project development under the UNFCCC CDM PoA.

8.5.39 In the framework of RPs, all the Voluntary Project Activities (VPAs) foreseen by PoA shall define their primary ecological contribution and then climate contribution, that shall be:

- both positive contributions.

8.5.40 Moreover, eligible VPAs shall have:

- positive contributions or at least neutral (according to the DNSH – Do Not Significant Harm principle) on soil (e.g., restore soil) and water (e.g. increase the availability of clean and safe water).

(i) RCU ISSUANCE

8.5.41 RCU are generated by RPs which contribute to climate and ecological units. Each OAU represents a regenerative unit covering the two single units.

8.5.42 The following metric is chosen:

(a) ton CO_2 eq for carbon removal,

(b) multiplier for ecological condition (as in VERRA SDVM002 Nature Framework Methodology)[3] ranging from 0 to 1

(c) Area restored by the RP (m^2 or ha)

8.5.43 RCUs are evaluated as described in the following:

(a) Carbon removal shall be calculated for the RP and expressed as ton CO_2 eq alogn the crediting period

(b) Carbon removal shall be compared to project emissions (expressed as ton CO_2 eq and evaluated with a Life Cycle approach along the crediting period) for the calculation of the climate contribution

(c) Enhance of ecological condition shall be expressed according to a linear incremental scale

(d) RCUs, as nature contributions are quantified in quality hectares (Qha), aligning with the SD VISta Nature Framework. Qha are calculated as the product of ecosystem Extent (in ha) and Condition (value 0–1).

[3] SD VISta Nature Framework, v1.0

(e) The formula for the calculation of the RCUs is:

$$Qha = Extent\ [ha\ or\ m^2] \times Condition[0-1]$$

$$\Delta Qha = (Extent\ [ha\ or\ m^2] \times Condition[0-1])_{project} - (Extent\ [ha\ or\ m^2] \times Condition[0-1])_{baseline}$$

$$RCUs\ [ha\ or\ m^2] = \Delta Qha$$

Quality hectars (Qhas) are calculated as the product of the area under restoration (expressed in hectares or square meters) and the condition of that area, measured on a scale from 0 (degraded) to 1 (intact). The resulting Qha reflects the area-adjusted quality of the ecosystem. The regenerative contribution is then expressed as the net gain in Qha over time, calculated by subtracting the baseline value (i.e., what the ecosystem would have been without the project) from the project scenario.

In accordance with the SD VISta Nature Framework, this methodology shifts from carbon-centric RCUs to ecological-oriented quality hectares (Qha). Qha serves as a universal unit representing the ecological value of an area, integrating both extent and condition.

Ecological enhancement is represented by a contribution factor on a linear scale from 0 to 1. This ecological contribution acts as an incremental multiplier applied to the extent when it approaches 0, the RCU remains close to the zero; when it reaches 1, ecological condition has significantly improved and the RCU is closer to the overall area; intermediate values (e.g., 0.3 or 0.6) proportionally increase the weight of the ecological co-benefit.

8.5.44 RCUs can be generated only by RPs with a positive (>0) impact on both ecological condition and climate contribution. The climate contribution must be calculated according to point 7.5.44 (a -b) of the present Programme.

8.6 REQUIREMENTS FOR REGISTRATION AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION OF PROJECTS AND CREDITS

8.6.1 Any project generated in accordance with the Protocol, to sell OAUs (Ocean Assist Units) after their issuance shall be registered on a public Registry having the following characteristics:

(a) The registry must be publicly accessible and available internationally.

(b) The registry must provide public access to underlying project information

including, at minimum, project descriptions and design documents, monitoring reports, and validation and verification reports.

(c) The registry must individually identify units through unique serial numbers.

(d) The registry must identify credit status including, at minimum, "issued", "retired" and "optioned".

(e) The registry must have publicly available rules and procedures including: issued under procedures that provide for their permanent retirement; traceable back to the relevant GHG project; have measures for avoiding double counting, e.g. where a GHG emission reduction or GHG removal enhancement is claimed by more than one entity, and for avoiding double claiming between entities and national governments.

8.6.2 The public registry approved by the Program Operator is the eCO2care VER Registry. Future modifications on this matter may be made, if necessary, in light of the creation of registries directly managed by superior entities.

8.7 VALIDATION AND VERIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

8.7.1 This section provides minimum requirements for Validation and Verification Bodies (VVBs) that perform Validation, and Verification of OA activities - including RPs, PoAs and their Voluntary Project Activities (VPAs).

8.7.2 The third parties whose project validation and verification activities are recognized by MOAP are exclusively certification bodies accredited by recognized public or private accreditation bodies and with proven experience in the greenhouse gas sector, which satisfy both of the following criteria[4]:

(a) Accreditation to the latest version of the ISO 14065 "General principles and requirements for bodies validating and verifying environmental information",

(b) Accreditation to the latest version of the ISO 17029 "Conformity assessment – General principles and requirements for validation and verification bodies."

8.7.3 Validation and Verification Bodies (VVBs) accredited by the MOAP to operate according to the OAP listed on the eCO2care Registry. The list is public and regularly updated.

8.7.4 In carrying out its validation and verification process, the VVB shall use and determine the compliance with the valid versions of the applicable regulatory documents approved under the OAP.

[4] These standards can be obtained from any ISO member from the website of the ISO Central Secretariat at the following address: <www.iso.org>. Copyright remains with ISO.

8.8 PROJECT CYCLE

8.8.1 RPs cycle shall follow the following documentation to be registered within the eCO2care Registry:

(a) Project Design Document (PDD) including Baseline, Monitoring & Reporting Plan.

(b) Validation Report by OA-VVB.

(c) Formal acceptance by the MOAP of a validated project as a RP.

(d) Verification Report by OA-VVB of RPs regenerative contribution for each goal.

(e) Certification Statement by OA-VVB with the quantification, during the monitored period, of the achieved regenerative contribution as verified.

After a completeness check, OAUs are issued by MOAP.

8.8.2 RPs documentation, supporting documentation, are made publicly available on the eCO2care Registry

8.8.3 The whole procedure is described and updated on the eCO2care Registry.