Grassroots Carbon (Michael Dillinger)

GRASSROOTS CARBON

Grassroots Carbon Public Benefit LLC · San Antonio, Texas

July 6, 2026

Surabhi Subedi
Washington State Department of Ecology
Climate Pollution Reduction Program
PO Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504-7600
Submitted via: https://ecology.commentinput.com/?id=frD53sZtA
Email: CPRRulemaking@ecy.wa.gov

Re: Public Comment on Proposed Rulemaking (WSR 26-12-055; AO #24-02) — Chapter 173-446 WAC (Climate Commitment Act Program Rule) and Chapter 173-441 WAC (Reporting of Emissions of Greenhouse Gases): Cap-and-Invest Program Updates and Linkage. Comment period June 1 – July 17, 2026.

Dear Ms. Subedi and Members of the Climate Pollution Reduction Program:

Grassroots Carbon Public Benefit LLC ("Grassroots Carbon" or "GRC") respectfully submits these comments on Ecology's proposed amendments to the Climate Commitment Act (CCA) Program Rule and the greenhouse gas reporting rule. Grassroots Carbon is a regenerative-agriculture and soil-carbon company that partners with ranchers and landowners to implement managed-grazing systems that rebuild soil organic carbon, and to quantify, verify, and market the resulting removals under rigorous, third-party-verified protocols. Our work spans grasslands and grazing lands across the United States, including partnerships with several Washington ranchers stewarding working lands in the state.

We support Ecology's objective of aligning the Cap-and-Invest Program with the California-Québec market and strengthening program integrity. We write principally to urge Ecology to use this rulemaking and the offset provisions it amends to open a durable, science-based pathway for soil carbon removal from regenerative grazing to be recognized as a compliance offset in Washington, and to point Ecology toward the Climate Action Reserve (CAR) as the natural registry and protocol home for that pathway. We also offer targeted comments on the offset, linkage, and reporting provisions as they bear on nature-based soil carbon.

Summary of Recommendations

We respectfully urge Ecology to use this rulemaking—and the offset provisions it amends—to take the following steps, each developed further below:

1. **Establish a soil carbon compliance offset pathway** under WAC 173-446 (including the protocol-adoption criteria of WAC 173-446-505 and the offset limits of WAC 173-446-600), so verified removals from regenerative grazing can be used for compliance, consistent with RCW 70A.65.170.
2. **Adopt the CAR U.S. Soil Enrichment Protocol as the model and registry,** as Washington did with four other CAR-origin protocols, and encourage its extension to regenerative grazing on grasslands and rangelands.
3. **Credit soil carbon** and adopt reversal and buffer-pool safeguards paralleling those for forest offsets.
4. **Preserve and expand in-state offset capacity as the market links,** including capacity for projects on Tribal and rural working lands, so offsets deliver the direct in-state benefits the rule requires.

1. Recognize Soil Carbon from Regenerative Grazing as a Compliance Offset

A. The statutory and rule framework already contemplates adding protocols.

The CCA authorizes Ecology to adopt by rule the protocols for establishing offset projects and generating offset credits that covered and opt-in entities may use to meet a portion of their compliance obligations (RCW 70A.65.170). WAC 173-446-505 sets the requirements for adopting a compliance offset protocol, and WAC 173-446-600 governs how offset credits, including those issued in linked jurisdictions, may be used for compliance. Because this rulemaking amends the offset provisions (including WAC 173-446-600(7)), it is an appropriate vehicle for Ecology to signal its intent to develop a soil carbon offset pathway and begin the technical work to adopt one.

To date, Washington has adopted four offset protocols (Ozone Depleting Substances, Urban Forest, Livestock (dairy and swine manure/biogas), and U.S. Forest) each originating with California's program and CAR. None credits soil carbon sequestration on working grazing lands. That is a gap: soil carbon removal from managed grazing is among the largest, most cost-effective, and most co-benefit-rich nature-based mitigation opportunities available to Washington, yet it is absent from the compliance toolkit.

B. In a linked market, soil carbon is uniquely positioned to satisfy the in-state-benefit requirement.

Washington's offset framework requires that offset projects provide direct environmental benefits to the state, and the linkage amendments make that requirement more demanding, not less. Under WAC 173-446-600(7), once Ecology links, at least 50 percent of the offset credits a covered or opt-in entity uses in the first compliance period must come from projects providing direct environmental benefits in Washington, rising to at least 75 percent in the second and subsequent periods. A linked market therefore creates real demand for high-integrity, in-state offset supply and soil carbon on Washington's working lands is uniquely positioned to meet it.

Grassroots Carbon already partners with several Washington ranchers, and a soil carbon offset pathway would let that work and the ranchers who could join it contribute to compliance while keeping the benefits in Washington. Beyond carbon removal, managed grazing delivers proven, localized co-benefits: improved soil health; enhanced water retention and reduced non-point-source runoff; increased biodiversity across rangelands; and reduced reliance on synthetic inputs. These co-benefits accrue where the land is, inside Washington, aligning tightly with the CCA's in-state-benefit requirement and its environmental-justice objectives.

2. Use the Climate Action Reserve U.S. Soil Enrichment Protocol as the Model and Registry

Ecology need not build a soil carbon protocol from scratch. The Climate Action Reserve (already the source of several Washington-adopted protocols and one of North America's most established registries) maintains the U.S. Soil Enrichment Protocol (SEP) for quantifying, monitoring, reporting, and verifying practices that increase soil organic carbon. We recommend that Ecology:

- **Evaluate the CAR SEP under WAC 173-446-505** as the technical basis for a Washington soil carbon compliance offset protocol, tailored (as Ecology has done for the U.S. Forest protocol) to Washington's soils, ecoregions, and program requirements.
- **Leverage CAR's registry infrastructure.** CAR's established project registry, verification-body accreditation, and buffer-pool machinery would let Washington stand up a soil carbon pathway efficiently and with high integrity.

3. Preserve and Expand Offset Capacity as the Market Links

We support the proposed clarifications governing use of offset credits in a linked market, including those ensuring that a substantial share of offsets used for Washington compliance deliver direct environmental benefits in Washington (WAC 173-446-600). As Ecology finalizes these amendments, we ask it to keep three points in view:

1. **Maintain meaningful offset usage limits and Tribal-lands provisions.** The proposal retains the overall offset limits (up to 8% in the first compliance period and 6% thereafter, plus additional capacity for projects on Tribal lands). We support preserving and, where the science and supply allow, expanding room for high-integrity offsets, including soil carbon, so the market rewards genuine in-state removals rather than relying solely on allowances.
2. **Grow the supply of high-integrity, in-state offsets.** Offsets can only relieve compliance costs and deliver co-benefits if eligible supply exists. A Washington soil carbon protocol would expand that supply using working lands the state already has, complementing forest offsets and diversifying the pool of project types.
3. **Extend the opportunity on Tribal and rural lands.** The rule reserves additional offset capacity for projects on federally recognized Tribal lands (an added 3% in the first compliance period and 2% thereafter, separate from the base limits). Soil carbon from managed grazing is well suited to Tribal and rural working lands, creating a new revenue stream for those communities while generating the in-state benefits the rule requires—advancing both the program's climate goals and its equity objectives.

Conclusion

This rulemaking lets Washington align its carbon market with California and Québec while broadening the compliance toolkit to include one of the most promising, co-benefit-rich forms of nature-based carbon removal. We respectfully urge Ecology to establish a soil carbon compliance offset pathway, to adopt the Climate Action Reserve's U.S. Soil Enrichment Protocol as the model and registry, to credit durable deep soil carbon, and to preserve meaningful room for high-integrity, in-state offsets, including on Tribal and rural lands, as the market links. Grassroots Carbon appreciates Ecology's consideration and would welcome the opportunity to provide technical assistance, field data, or protocol input.

Respectfully submitted,

____

Mike Dillinger
Chief Legal Officer
Grassroots Carbon Public Benefit LLC