

Misti Schmidt

As a conservation lawyer based in the Bay Area, I represent landowners and land trusts who are working every day to conserve California's working forests and farms in the face of development and economic pressure. Much of those conservation efforts are funded by (1) the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund's Sustainable Agricultural Lands Program and (2) income from offsets generated by Improved Forest Management carbon projects. One of the industry commenters earlier today at the Board meeting stated that Cap and Invest is not meant to create a permanent funding source for all of the "feel-good" activities that air and transit districts and EJ and environmental advocates have been describing, and that instead, if policy dictates, those funds should be reallocated to industry to prevent leakage.

Contrary to that commenter's statement, GGRF funds underwrite programs that reduce emissions and help the state transition from fossil fuels. If we want to talk about leakage, loss of working lands will increase VMTs for food, fiber, and timber. Loss of public transit will cause riders to drive more. The list goes on.

The MDI changes in the 15-day notice are substantial and require a more fulsome public process. If the Board does not vote outright to reject the changes, it should at least delay the vote and give all stakeholders and the public a meaningful opportunity to participate in the process to craft a real MDI program that includes legitimate guardrails around additionality and direct environmental benefits, so that the funds reallocated from the GGRF and the programs it currently funds truly do benefit the state.