



SEARCH



Stop biodiversity offsets: Thousands sign letter to the European Commission

By Chris Lang

21 October 2014

European Union



More than 9,000 people and 67 organisations have signed on to a **letter** urging the European Commission to drop its plans for biodiversity offsetting. Biodiversity offsets would “harm nature and people” and “give power to those who destroy nature for profit”, the letter states.

Biodiversity offsetting is a simple idea that makes no sense whatsoever (except for corporations that profit from destruction): nature can be destroyed in one place as long as it is conserved somewhere else.

In the UK, developers have come up with the crazy idea of bulldozing 800-year-old woodland to make way for a motorway service station. The plan is justified by planting 60,000 trees to **offset the destruction**.

Like all ideas, crazy or otherwise, biodiversity offsetting didn't just fall out of the sky.

Ricardo Bayon's magical box

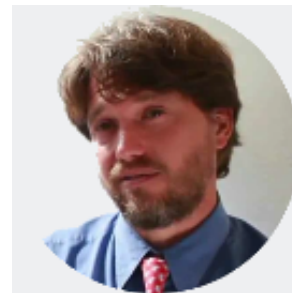
In January 2006, Ricardo Bayon, then-managing director of Ecosystem Marketplace, **registered** a website called speciesbanking.com. The website describes itself as, “a global information clearinghouse for a segment of biodiversity markets focusing on biodiversity offsetting, compensation and banking”.

Two years later, Bayon wrote “Conservation and Biodiversity Banking: A Guide to Setting Up and Running Biodiversity Credit Trading System,” published by Earthscan in London.

Then he set up an investment management and advisory firm called Eko Asset Management Partners to cash in on what he clearly hopes will be a lucrative business. Bayon thinks of a tree as a “magical box”. In a promotional video on **Eko's** website he says,



"Just think what would happen if you had this magical box, this magical box that was invented by somebody, somewhere, which what it does was it takes carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, it uses solar power to produce a building material and it is beneficial for species. Well that magic box exists. It's called a tree."



Helping big polluters

As if to reinforce the point that Bayon's investment firm exists to help polluting corporations, the next person to speak on the video is from BP. Lisa Walker, then-director of Carbon Ventures at BP, tells us that "A fifth of global emissions every year, as high as that, just from deforestation, and tropical deforestation in particular."

The logic behind biodiversity offsets is the same as the logic behind carbon offsets. There is no need to stop destroying nature or polluting the atmosphere. BP can continue drilling oil, as long as we save the rainforests. There is no need to stop the bulldozers or chainsaws anywhere, as long as we plant some trees or save some forest somewhere else.

In a [press release](#) about the letter to the European Commissioner, Hannah Mowat of FERN says,

"We fear Biodiversity Offsetting will play into the hands of powerful project developers. Now is the time to take a strong commitment to protect nature. The new Environment Commissioner should stand firm to protect the Nature Directives rather than waste time on risky offsetting schemes."

The letter is also available in [Spanish](#), [German](#), [Italian](#) and [French](#). [Click here](#) for the list of the 9,279 people who have signed on.

Open letter to Commissioner Potočník about biodiversity offsetting

Janez Potočník
Commissioner for the Environment
European Commission
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

17th October 2014



Dear Environment Commissioner,

We are a group of concerned organisations and individuals who believe that the legislation on biodiversity offsetting being considered by the European Commission would harm nature and people, and would give power to those who

destroy nature for private profit. We ask for all plans on offsetting to be dropped.

Offsetting provides a licence to trash

Global experience of biodiversity offsetting shows that it actually creates additional pressure on biodiversity. This is because it gives contentious development green credentials. For instance, in the UK, the government has been quite open that biodiversity offsetting will “speed up planning applications”.

Biodiversity offsets have already facilitated approval of development proposals on ancient woodland, high value grasslands and areas that local communities enjoy.

Commodifying nature

Biodiversity offsetting commodifies nature and sends out a dangerous message that nature is replaceable. Biodiversity and ecosystems are complex and unique. It is impossible to reduce biodiversity into a system of credits as envisaged by many offsetting systems.



Communities lose access to nature

Biodiversity offsetting masks the fact that when you destroy nature, it is lost forever, leading to loss of biodiversity and a loss of access to nature for communities, affecting people's health, well-being and enjoyment. People cherish nature not just for what it is, but for where it is. The social role that nature plays in the lives of people and communities cannot be offset.



Protecting nature, recognising responsibilities, no offsetting

If the EU and Member States are concerned by the ongoing loss of biodiversity, they must recognise that offsetting will make the problem worse. Tackling biodiversity loss requires that Member States implement laws that protect biodiversity, take a critical look at how land is used and elaborate local development plans in partnership, not in opposition to, local communities. Economies must be structured in the interests of citizens and not those of big business.

Nature is a common good that all share rights to and have responsibilities over. To be effective, any policy

to protect biodiversity must take these considerations into account.

We urge the European Commission to drop plans for EU legislation on biodiversity offsetting. Such policies will only succeed in enabling those that can afford it to destroy nature for private profit. The EU should act in the public interest by protecting biodiversity, nature and public spaces through clear regulation and meaningful enforcement.



Yours sincerely,

Action Nature et Territoire (ACNAT) Languedoc-Roussillon, France

Aitec-IPAM FranceAmis de la Terre midi-Pyrénées, France

Animal Conservation and Welfare Foundation, Poland

ARA e.V., Germany

Associació Plataforma Salvem Andratx, Spain

Attac Austria, Austria

Attac France

Biofuel Watch, UK

Both ENDS, Netherlands

Carbon Trade Watch, Spain

CEE Bankwatch Network, Italy

Centre d'Etude et de Sauvegarde de la Biodiversité, France

Climaxi, Belgium

Collectif Causse Méjean – Gaz de Schiste NON!, France

Conservation Justice, Belgium

Corporate Europe Observatory, Belgium

counter balance, Belgium

denkhausbremen.de, Germany

DKA Austria, Austria

ECA-Watch Austria

Ecologistas en Accion, Spain

EcoNexus, UK

Ecoropa, Germany

Environmental and Social Change (ESC), UK

FERN, UK

Food & Water Europe, Belgium

Forest Peoples Programme, UK

forum Nachhaltig Wirtschaften / Altop Verlag, Germany

Friends of Siberian Forests, Russian Federation

Friends of the Earth Europe, Switzerland

Friends of the Earth Flanders, Belgium

Friends of the Earth International, Costa Rica

Friends of the Earth Spain

Friends of the Earth UK

Gaia Foundation, UK

Gesellschaft zur Rettung der Delphine e.V., Germany

GLOBAL 2000, Austria

Global Forest Coalition, Netherlands

Global Witness, UK

Initiative 50thousand Trees, Germany

Lavigne Biodiv network, France
 La Via Campesina, France
 Les Amis de la Terre, France
 Les Amis de la Terre du Val de Bièvre, France
 Make A Change, United States
 Mining Watch Romania
 Malta Organic Agriculture Movement
 No FiBS (No fracking in Balcombe Society), UK
 Observatori del Deute en la Globalització, Spain
 Plant, USA
 Platform, UK
 Pro Wildlife, Germany
 Re:Common, Italy
 Rettet den Regenwald e.V./Rainforest Rescue, Germany
 Save our Woods, UK
 Shark Research Institute, United States
 Sobrevivencia/FoE-Paraguay
 The Corner House, UK
 The Land Magazine, UK
 The Woodland League, Ireland
 Third World Network, Malaysia
 Timberwatch coalition, South Africa
 Transnational Institute, Netherlands
 Urgewald, Germany
 World Development Movement, UK
 World Economy, Ecology & Development (WEED), Germany

Full Disclosure: REDD-Monitor has received funding from FERN and the European Commission. [Click here](#) for all of REDD-Monitor's funding sources.

Related posts:



California groups urge Governor to reject REDD carbon offsets



Biodiversity offsetting is a licence to trash



Biodiversity offsetting in action: Bulldoze the UK's ancient woodlands? No problem, just plant ...



Ditch biodiversity offsets: Thousands sign letter to the European Commission



Biodiversity offsetting
makes dreams come true
- for developers

Tagged **Biodiversity Offsets.**

« REDD in the news: 13-19 October 2014

More scams: Sterling and Bond, Voiptel
International and Velvet Assets »

2 Comments



Jeremy Sweet

21 October 2014 at 3:54 pm

The offsetting proposed by developers and others often relates to destroying an ecosystem and establishing another, the assumption being that the new ecosystem would have the same biodiversity as the old one. This is clearly not the case in different locations, and is not likely to occur in the same location even after a long time period. Thus conservation of species by producing alternative refugia/habitats should not be confused with destruction of ecosystems, particularly older environments which have evolved complex and high levels of biodiversity over 100s or 1000s of years. In developed countries old natural and semi-natural woodlands provide the last vestiges of the vegetation that covered much of their lowlands. Conservation of these ecosystems is therefore extremely important. Destruction and replacement with synthetic alternatives is only justified if all other alternatives have been fully explored and the need to do this is considered imperative. In most areas of the developed world there are numerous degraded sites with low levels of biodiversity which offer effective alternatives and where developers can actually enhance biodiversity if they incorporate certain features such as small woods, permanent meadows, wet lands etc..



Yvette Aguilar

21 October 2014 at 7:55 pm

It is not just that the logic behind biodiversity offsets is the same as the logic behind carbon offsets, under current climate change negotiations the promoters of what ever "land use, land use change & forestry activity" offsets, either in developed or developing countries under the Kyoto Protocol flexibility mechanisms, or eventually under the new Convention regime beyond 2020; are pushing for additional mitigation practices related to carbon stock changes. Thus, under the SBSTA formal process, three additional practices have been prioritized, namely: (i) revegetation, including agroforestry and silvopastoral practices; (ii) croplands and grasslands management; and (iii) wetlands rewetting & draining. The rationale behind all those negotiating moves is to further include all this under REDD-plus

schemes, in the context of the new 2015 agreement.

Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published.

Name

Email

Website

Comment

Post Comment

☐ Notify me of follow-up comments by email.

☐ Notify me of new posts by email.



Subscribe:

Enter your email address to receive updates of new posts.

Email Address

Subscribe

Recent comments: