As of July 21, 2025, ERS has rebranded to Equitable Earth.

All references to “ERS” refer to the standard body now operating under the Equitable Earth name.

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Contact:
Ecosystem Restoration Standard
25 Rue de Frémicourt
75015 Paris, FRANCE
info@ers.org

PROGRAMME

Standard Setting and Methodology Development Procedure

SUMMARY

The Standard Setting and Methodology Development Procedure ensures that any modifications to ERS Programme and Methodologies result from a transparent and well-informed decision-making process. This procedure is meticulously divided into two parts: one dedicated to standard-setting for modifying standard documents, and the other focused on developing or revising methodologies. In this process, decisions of the Technical Advisory Board (TAB) are sovereign and cannot be challenged or opposed formally or informally by ERS.

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Introduction

The document establishes a step-by-step procedure for developing and approving rules, requirements, procedures, and associated guidelines under the Ecosystem Restoration Standard (ERS), both at the Programme and Methodology levels.

The procedures established herein ensure that rules, requirements, procedures and guidelines are accurate and robust via review and approval by the Technical Advisory Body (TAB).

The document establishes procedures for the following:

- Development of new standard documents;
- Revision of existing standard documents;
- Development of new methodologies;
- Revision of existing methodologies.

NORMATIVE REFERENCES

This document was elaborated and must be read in conjunction with:

- ERS Programme
- ERS Governance
- Code of Ethics and Business Conduct
- Technical Advisory Board

General *Principles*

1. **Application**. The procedures established in this document apply to all TAB Members and ERS Agents. Moreover, it provides clear and necessary oversight guidance to stakeholders such as Developers, Validation/Verification Bodies, and other global stakeholders.

2. **Roles**. The ERS Secretariat, in consultation with other ERS entities, is responsible for the development and revision of Standard documents, new Methodologies and subsequent revisions. The Technical Advisory Board (TAB) offers scientific and technical insights and is responsible for reviewing Standard and Methodology documents in the approval procedure. For more information on the role and responsibilities of the TAB, please refer to the Technical Advisory Board document.

3. **Revisions**. The development of a new Standard document, a new Methodology, and subsequent revisions must go through the procedures described below unless they are considered Direct Revisions.

4. **Direct Revisions**. This procedure allows the Secretariat to directly modify Standard documents to adapt to market changes swiftly without overloading the TAB. Direct revisions can be made in the following instances:

    4.1. **Accreditation and Endorsement bodies**. An effort to comply with international standards and accreditation bodies (e.g. ICROA, CORSIA, IC-VCM).

    4.2. **Legal and regulatory framework**. An effort to adapt to changes in the applicable legal and regulatory framework.

    4.3. **Minor changes**. For matters that do not significantly alter the intent or implications of existing Standard or methodology documents.

Direct Revisions are not subjected to TAB approval or Public Comment Periods. A Direct Revision is strictly restricted to the topic that justifies it.

5. **Continuous Improvement**. All procedures described in this document aim to ameliorate the Standard documentation, Methodologies and associated documents.

6. **Record Keeping**. The Secretariat is responsible for keeping a permanent record of all elements and versions of the Programme and Methodologies, as well as every version of each Standard Setting and Methodology Development Procedure document, namely:

    6.1. Methodology Development/Revision Mandate or Standard Development/Revision Mandate;

    6.2. Methodology Development/Revision Mandate or Standard Development/Revision Proposition;

    6.3. Call for Public Comment Period;

    6.4. Public Comment Digest;

    6.5. Final Revision Proposition.

7. **Public Disclosure.** The Secretariat is responsible for publicly disclosing the above documents on the ERS website, and for guaranteeing that Stakeholders have equal access to them.

Standard Setting *Procedure*

1. Development Phase

The development or revision of a Standard document may be triggered by one or more of the following four (4) situations.

1.1. **Standard Development/Revision Proposition**. Based on strategic objectives and/or the feedback collected from stakeholders such as Developers, VVBs, external experts and other ERS Entities, the Secretariat may submit a Standard Development/Revision Proposition to the TAB. The Proposition must thoroughly detail all the new rules, requirements, procedures or changes proposed for the Standard and its affiliated documents. The Secretariat may draft the Propositions in collaboration with other ERS Entities.

1.2. **Standard Development/Revision Mandate.** The TAB may also mandate the Secretariat to draft a Standard Development/Revision Proposition. This mandate must include the following guidelines:

- The identification number of the Development/Revision;
- The aim and rationale for the Development/Revision;
- The scope of the Development/Revision;
- A provisional timeline for the Development/Revision;
- If applicable, the expected risks associated with the proposed Development/Revision;
- The duration of the expected Public Comment Period, if different from the standard thirty (30) days.

1.3. **Regular updates**. All Standard's documentation shall be reviewed at

least every two (2) years or as requested by the TAB. The revisions can be specific to a document (such as Programme) or the entire Standard, as deemed appropriate by the TAB.

2. Review Phase

2.1. **Review.** The TAB must review and respond to Standard Development/Revision Propositions within thirty (30) consecutive days or any other pre-defined timeline. If the TAB fails to respond within this period, the proposition is considered rejected. Based on their review, the TAB may:

- Accept the Standard Development/Revision Proposition;
- Request the Secretariat for further revisions. A Standard Development/Revision Proposition can be sent back to the Secretariat up to five (5) times, after which it will be deemed rejected;
- Reject the Standard Development/Revision Proposition.

2.2. **Justification**. In every case, the TAB must provide a written justification for its decision.

2.3. **Public Comment Period.**

2.3.1. Depending on the subject of the Development/Revision, a Public Comment Period might be required to account for Stakeholders' comments and feedback.

2.3.2. This Public Comment Period is mandatory when the Standard Development/Revision Proposition:

- Modifies existing Standard documents in a way that significantly alters its requirements, procedures or concepts;

- Introduces a new Standard document, with contents not previously included in any Standard document.

2.4. **Call for Public Comment**. If necessary, the Secretariat must organise and launch a Public Comment Period for at least thirty (30) consecutive days, unless a different period is mandated by the TAB.

2.4.1. The Call for Public Comment will be published on the ERS website and social media.

2.4.2. The Secretariat must proactively reach out to identified key Stakeholders, including local Stakeholders where Projects are certified.

2.4.3. ERS must strive to include diverse views from ecologists, carbon market experts, and livelihood experts.

2.5. **Consultation Digest**. The Secretariat assesses all comments, feedback and suggestions received during the consultation and summarises them in a Consultation Digest, which must include:

- A structured review of all suggestions, with the Secretariat's response on whether or not these suggestions will be implemented;
- A justification for each comment or suggestion that is accepted or rejected.

2.6. **Timeline.** The Secretariat must publish the Consultation Digest no more than 75 business days from the closing date of the Call for Public Comment on the ERS website and social media. If this timeline is exceeded, ERS must issue a public justification for the delay.

3. Approval Phase

3.1. **Final Standard Revision.** If no Public Comment Period is required, the Secretariat will directly submit the Final Standard Revision to the TAB. If a Public Comment Period was required, the Secretariat must integrate its feedback into the Final Standard Revision and send it to the TAB along with the corresponding Consultation Digest.

3.2. **Final Standard Revision**. The TAB can:

3.2.1. Accept the Final Standard Revision.

3.2.2. Deem the Final Standard Revision incomplete and send it back to the Secretariat for further revisions. This can be done an unlimited number of times. If a Public Comment Period is required, the TAB can deem its feedback was not properly integrated.

3.3. **Public disclosure**. The Secretariat then publishes the final version of the Standard and/or its affiliated documents on ERS' website.

Methodology Development and Revision *Procedure*

1. Development Phase

The creation of a new Methodology or the revision of an existing one may be triggered by one or more of the following three (3) situations:

1.1. **Methodology Development/Revision Proposition.** Based on strategic objectives and/or the feedback collected internally and from stakeholders such as Developers, VVBs, external experts, and ERS entities, the Secretariat may develop or revise a Methodology and its associated documents and submit it to the TAB. The Secretariat may draft the development/revision with other ERS Entities, and external experts gathered in a Working Group. The Methodology developed/revised must exhaustively detail the rules, requirements and procedures in all the elements of the Methodology, including but not limited to:

1.1.1. Eligibility criteria;

1.1.2. Ecological Recovery Pillar with its Principles and Methods;

1.1.3. Livelihoods Pillar with its Principles and Methods;

1.1.4. Carbon Pillar with its Principles, Methods and its associated Quantification Methodology, specifically:

- Determination of the Project boundary, including selection of relevant GHG sources, sinks and reservoirs.

- Establishment of a baseline scenario.
- Demonstration of additionality.
- Quantification of net GHG removals:
    - Determination of the baseline scenario;
    - Determination of the Project's removals;
    - Determination of Project emissions;
    - Determination of leakage;
    - Uncertainty and associated parameters.

1.1.5. Determination of GHG reversal risk and a reversal mitigation plan.

1.1.6. Monitoring and Reporting of achieved net GHG removals and Project interventions.

1.2. **Methodology Development/Revision Mandate.** The TAB may mandate the Secretariat to develop/revise a Methodology. The mandate must come with the following guidelines:

- The aim and rationale for the Methodology Development/Revision;
- The scope of the Methodology Development/Revision;
- A provisional timeline for Methodology Development/Revision;
- If applicable, the expected risks associated with the proposed Methodology or the Project type;
- The scope and duration of the expected Public Comment Period, if different from the standard thirty (30) days;

- The necessity to engage with external experts (individuals or organisations) to review the Methodology developed/revised.

1.3. **Regular updates**. The Secretariat must review and update Methodologies every two (2) years to align its requirements with the latest market best practices and latest science. A review or update to the Methodology may also be requested by the TAB before two (2) years.

2. Review Phase

2.1. **Review.** The TAB must review and respond to the Methodology Development/Revision Proposition within thirty (30) consecutive days or any pre-defined timeline. If the TAB fails to respond within this period, the proposition is considered rejected. Based on their review, the TAB may:

- Accept the Methodology Development/Revision Proposition;
- Request the Secretariat for further revisions. A Methodology Development/Revision Proposition can be sent back to the Secretariat up to five (5) times, after which it will be deemed rejected;
- Request the Secretariat to engage with additional external experts, gathered into a Working Group, alongside the TAB to review the Methodology Development/Revision Proposition to ensure its accuracy and robustness;
- Reject the Methodology Development/Revision Proposition.

2.2. **Justification.** In every case, the TAB must provide a written justification for its decision.

2.3. **Public Comment.**

2.3.1. Depending on the Methodology, Project type, and scope of development/revision, a Public Comment Period may be required to account for Stakeholders' comments and feedback.

2.3.2. A Public Comment is mandatory when:

- A new Methodology or Methodology document, such as a tool not previously established in any other document, is proposed.
- A significant revision to the eligibility criteria, the Livelihoods, Ecological Recovery or Carbon pillars that significantly alters the approach for baseline setting, monitoring and reporting. This specifically includes the carbon baseline scenario and additionality demonstration.

2.3.3. If necessary, the Secretariat must organise and launch a Public Comment Period for at least thirty (30) consecutive days unless a different period is mandated by TAB.

- The Call for Public Comment will be published on the ERS website and social media.
- The Secretariat must proactively reach out to identified key Stakeholders, including local stakeholders where Projects are certified.
- ERS must strive to include diverse views from ecologists, carbon market experts, and livelihood experts.

2.4. **Consultation Digest.** The Secretariat assesses all comments, feedback and suggestions received during the consultation and summarises them in a Consultation Digest, which must include:

- A structured review of all suggestions, with the Secretariat's response on whether or not these suggestions will be implemented;

- A justification for each comment or suggestion that is accepted or rejected.

2.5. **Timeline.** The Secretariat must publish the Consultation Digest no more than 75 business days from the closing date of the Call for Public Comment on the ERS website and social media. if this timeline is exceeded, ERS must issue a public justification for the delay.

3. Approval Phase

3.1. **Final Methodology Version.** If no Public Comment Period is warranted, the Secretariat must incorporate comments from the TAB (including independent experts if mandated) and submit the Methodology document to the TAB for final review and approval. Where there was a Public Comment Period, the Secretariat must incorporate relevant comments and suggestions into the Methodology document for review and approval by TAB.

3.2. **Final Standard Development/Revision**. The TAB can:

3.2.1. Accept the Final Methodology document.

3.2.2. Deem the Final Methodology version to be incomplete and send it back to the Secretariat for further revisions. This can be done an unlimited number of times. If a Public Comment Period was required, the TAB can deem its feedback was not properly integrated.

4. Withdrawal

4.1. Outdated methodologies or methodologies identified by Stakeholders and/or the TAB as overestimating net GHG removals must be immediately withdrawn. If any significant issues or "red flags" concerning conservativeness, baseline scenarios or additionality arise during a review process, the Methodology must be promptly withdrawn.

Ecosystem Restoration Standard

info@ers.org | www.ers.org