



Southern Ute Ensuring Tribal Environmental and Economic Sustainability

Challenges

- The Southern Ute Indian lands in southwestern Colorado contain significant coal resources, which are leaking methane.
- Methane is a greenhouse gas that has a much higher global warming potential than carbon dioxide and contributes to climate change.
- To protect the environment and their land, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe wanted to capture the methane to prevent it from being emitted into the atmosphere.

Response

- Southern Ute developed a methodology for capturing and destroying the methane seeping from the coal beds on its lands.
- DNV performed an assessment of the methodology under the Verified Carbon Standard.
- This is the first methodology to address fugitive methane emissions from coal seams and coal bed outcroppings.

Benefits

- Capturing the methane results in fewer greenhouse gas emissions and helps preserve the natural resources of the reservation.
- Southern Ute will be able to sell the resulting carbon credits, generating income for its Tribal Growth Fund, which will help provide economic opportunities for the tribe.



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The Story

The Southern Ute Indian reservation lands cover over 1,000 square miles in southwestern Colorado and are home to an abundance of natural resources, including forests, wildlife and fisheries. Southern Ute is committed to conserving and managing these natural resources, protecting the environment and ensuring the wellbeing of its tribe members.

The reservation also contains ancient coal beds and coal seams from which methane gas is released into the atmosphere. In addition to being a potent greenhouse gas (GHG), methane has the potential to cause explosions. In order to mitigate the methane emissions, Southern Ute decided to drill gas interception wells near the methane gas seeps and use gas membranes and surface covers to capture the methane emissions at or just below the ground. The captured methane is concentrated, impurities are removed and the gas is then delivered to a pipeline so it can be used to produce electricity.

Southern Ute developed a modification to an existing Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) methodology to accomplish these objectives and the Southern Ute Tribal Growth Fund asked DNV to assess the methodology under the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS).

They chose DNV to conduct the assessment because of DNV's significant expertise in coal methane projects, reputation and experience with CDM methodologies, and commitment to sustainability.

Once DNV assessed the methodology, it was approved for use under the VCS, becoming the first VCS methodology to address fugitive methane emissions from coal seams and coal bed outcroppings. The methodology takes into account the volume of methane that would have been released had it not been captured and also includes a robust approach to quantifying the emissions reductions resulting from the methane capture.

This project will result in significant amounts of methane being captured instead of being emitted into the atmosphere. In addition to protecting the natural resources on reservation lands, Southern Ute will be able to sell the resulting emission credits and generate income for their Tribal Growth Fund.

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