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2013 Supplement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories: Wetlands

Implications for Scotland - Summary

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1. Introduction

In December 1993 the UK Government ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Convention, which commits parties to develop, publish and regularly update national emission inventories of greenhouse gases (GHGs), came into force in March 1994.

In 1997 a legally binding agreement known as the Kyoto Protocol was concluded under which industrialized countries committed to reducing their collective emissions of six greenhouse gases. *Good Practice Guidance for Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry* (*GPG-LULUCF*) was drafted for the consistent accounting of emissions through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and more specific guidance on the emissions from drained peatlands is now addressed through the *2013 Supplement to the 2006 Guidelines: Wetlands* (The 2013 Wetland Supplement). This forms a legal framework by which peatland rewetting activities (including restoration) may be accountable under National Inventories from 2013 onwards. The Scottish Government has made a legal commitment through the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, setting ambitious targets to **reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by at least 42 per cent by 2020, as a step towards an 80 per cent reduction by 2050.**

Two policy briefings have been prepared through ClimateXChange to examine the implications of the framework for Scottish reporting. The first assessed the use of the guidelines, then in draft, in GHG accounting of peatland restoration. The second examines the likely implications of changes in emissions calculations under UNFCCC reporting guidelines, as well as the steps likely to be required for future inclusion of Wetland Drainage and Rewetting (WDR) as a reporting category in national accounting, as per the *2013 Revised Supplementary Methods and Good Practice Guidance Arising from the Kyoto Protocol* (the 2013 Kyoto Protocol Supplement).

2. Peatlands in Scotland

A sizeable proportion of the land use sector in Scotland is located on highly organic soils. Much of the

1.7 million hectares of Scottish peatland has been recognised as being in poor condition, with estimates of over 50% of former blanket bog, and over 90% of former raised bog no longer carrying peat-forming vegetation. It has been internationally recognised that such degraded peat soils are the source of relatively high net Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions; whereas undisturbed peatlands generally act as net GHG sinks. Although restoration activities that aim to restore the habitat value of these ecosystems have been carried out for more than a decade in Scotland, it has so far not been possible to formally account for the carbon benefits that peatland restoration can achieve.

Although there have previously been opportunities for voluntary reporting, there is now potential to add peatland restoration activities under new emissions reporting categories defined in the 2013 Wetland Supplement and the new, elective, WDR category under the 2013 Kyoto Procotol Supplement.

3. An assessment of the 2013 Wetland Supplement for use in GHG accounting of Scottish peatland restoration

The first report, produced in February 2014, examines the implications of the emissions factors identified in the revised guidelines and compares these to figures previously prepared for Scotland. The new guidelines will enable the Scottish Government to report Scottish greenhouse gas emissions and emission savings from both wetland drainage and peatland restoration activities within the national greenhouse gas emissions inventory.

4. Implications for Longer term policy and implementation of the 2013 Wetlands Supplement

The second report, published in March 2015, summarises the likely implications of changes in emissions calculations under UNFCCC reporting guidelines, as well as the likely required steps to enable future inclusion of Wetland Drainage and Rewetting (WDR) as per the 2013 Kyoto Protocol Supplement as a reporting category. As WDR as a reporting category is the lowest in the reporting hierarchy, in some cases the implementation of rewetting practices will mean that such practices still will be reported under other elected activities. The report also includes research gaps that need to be addressed for the future development of higher level emissions factors that are UK specific. Due to the nature of current and future inventory reporting, we conclude that a calculation of the likely emissions savings as a result of peatland restoration in Inventory terms would necessitate further dialogue with the teams involved in Inventory reporting at CEH, FR and FCS, to unravel the likely future reporting changes to Forest Land, Grassland and Cropland categories from 2013 onwards. This will require a series of technical meetings on the intricacies emission reporting from afforested peatlands.