

EcoAid LLC sees green in carbon offsets

Firm helps clients be sustainable

BY PATRICK O'GRADY

pogrady@bizjournals.com

A growing movement toward more sustainable business practices and the pending federal cap-and-trade legislation have resulted in a new business model, and one Scottsdale startup is at the forefront.

EcoAid LLC is among those companies born out of changing dynamics in the business community. It's working to help companies understand how they affect the environment and what they can do about it, from buying renewable power to funding reforestation projects.

Founded about 18 months ago, EcoAid has been building a client base of companies that see green as a good foundation for future operations. It recently moved from Phoenix to new offices at ASU SkySong in Scottsdale. It already has 20-plus business clients in the Valley, including Bar-S Foods, Local First Arizona and the Frys.com Open.

Baron Bruno, the company's business development director, said going green is a good business decision.

"At some point down the road, we won't have a second



JIM FOURIE | PHOENIX BUSINESS JOURNAL

EcoAid LLC executives (clockwise from left) Skip Pollock, Brendan Cook, Jenna Ptacek, Ken Pollock and George Gebran help clients develop strategies to operate more eco-friendly businesses. The company recently moved its offices to ASU SkySong in Scottsdale.

ECO Aid: Company helps businesses analyze and offset carbon emissions

FROM PAGE 1

chance to say we should have done this earlier," he said.

Cap-and-trade regulations in the U.S., like those already implemented in some European countries, would require businesses to track their greenhouse gas emissions. The proposed legislation would allow companies that exceed a specified limit to offset those emissions by buying credits on the open market from companies that kept their emissions under the cap.

Such a system already is in place in the U.S. through several regional climate boards and the Chicago Climate Exchange, a voluntary carbon-trading program.

EcoAid doesn't trade credits between companies. Instead, it buys carbon offsets in the form of tree reforestation projects or stakes in renewable energy power generation, then brokers them to companies seeking to lower their carbon use, according to Chief Operating Officer George Gebran.

The company also offers businesses a carbon-emissions analysis to determine how they can reduce their emissions before purchasing offsets on the open market.

"What we want to do is pre-empt the legislation, miscommunication and greenwashing," said Bruno.

"Greenwashing" is used to describe the pitching of products, services or business practices that might not truly be as environmentally friendly as they are made out to be.

The Chicago exchange, known as the CCX, was founded in 2003. About 450 companies — including the likes of Ford Motor Co., Intel Corp. and Motorola Inc. — along with an array of specialized brokers make it easier for businesses to access carbon credits, said Brookly McLaughlin, director of communications for the exchange.

"There are companies that want to do this to further their sustainable goals," she said. "There are companies that do this because they want to get hands-on experience before it becomes law. There are a lot of different reasons."

EcoAid has had some success as more businesses look to become environmentally sustainable. The company helped the Frys.com Open become the first carbon-neutral golf event in the Valley, and it recently unveiled a carbon professional school to train people on carbon trading

'I don't know if carbon offsets and cap and trade are the answers to global warming, but at least they're something.'



Park Howell
Park&Co.

and other positions in sustainability.

A lot of its clients are early adopters. Park Howell, president of Park&Co., a Phoenix agency that specializes in marketing for sustainable companies, sees services such as EcoAid's as a way for businesses to examine green technologies and decide how much they're willing to do.

Howell contracted with EcoAid to get more information beyond changing out light bulbs and encouraging recycling.

He wanted to make green principles as integral to his business as they are to clients. As a result, the agency purchased offsets that pay for a reforestation project in Michigan, making it carbon-neutral.

"I don't know if carbon offsets and cap and trade are the answers to global warming, but at least they're something," Howell said. "The way

I see it, purchasing carbon credits is basically a self-imposed tax to help somewhat offset our impact on the environment."

EcoAid helps businesses develop strategies at a time when consumers are looking at companies' green claims with a skeptical eye, said Mara DeFilippis, founder and CEO of the Arizona Green Chamber of Commerce.

For the early adopters, the services are easy to subscribe to, whether it's through EcoAid or another company. The majority of the business community, however, still has a lot to learn, DeFilippis said.

"I think there's such a process of education, and there's a disconnect for businesses that really don't know where to go," she said.

EcoAid is a member of three exchanges: CCX, the Voluntary Carbon Standard and the Climate Action Reserve.

The company would not disclose its financial information, but Gebran said EcoAid is close to finalizing its first round of funding from a San Francisco-area venture capital firm. He would not share details of that deal either, as it is still pending.



EcoAid



DeFilippis

ECO AID LLC

HQ: Scottsdale

CEO: Ken Pollock

FOUNDED: 2008

EMPLOYEES: 7

CLIENTS: Bar-S Foods, Local First Arizona, Discount Cab Co., Oganicare Fine Dry Cleaning, Salem Foods, U.S. Egg, Printing Solutions and Above and Beyond Carpet & Tile Cleaning LLC, among others

WEB: www.ecoaidnow.com

GET CONNECTED

Chicago Climate Exchange: www.chicagoclimatex.com

Park&Co.: www.parkandco.com

Arizona Green Chamber of Commerce:

www.arizonagreenchamber.org