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EBay, PopTech Make Buying Carbon Offsets Easy

By Mark Anderson [✉](#) 10.18.07 | 12:00 AM

Technology conference PopTech is teaming up with eBay to launch an innovative platform that makes it easy for ordinary people to offset their carbon-dioxide emissions. When it opens to the public Thursday, the [PopTech Carbon Initiative](#) will operate like any other e-commerce site, with carbon offsets as the commodity. No bidding or auctioneering is needed, and transparency will set the initiative apart from other [carbon-offset schemes](#), said conference organizer Andrew Zoll.

"We allow individuals to invest their offsets directly in a world-changing project," he said in an e-mail. "Other carbon-offset companies buy credits in bulk, and you don't really know where your money is going. "The PopTech Carbon Initiative will allow anyone to calculate their individual carbon footprint, in tons of carbon dioxide. Then, on the same web page, they can buy however many tons of offset they choose from PopTech's three endorsed carbon-offsetting nongovernmental organizations:

- [Solar Electric Light Fund](#) works to substitute solar power for the diesel-fueled generators that run irrigation canals in Benin.
- [Instituto Ecológica](#), a Brazilian organization, is introducing waste biomass (such as sawdust, sugar-cane cuttings and coconut husks) as a fuel for ceramic kilns in the country's rural northeast.
- [Paso Pacifico](#), a land-conservation fund, preserves biodiversity-rich regions of coastal Central America.

The carbon-offsetting projects PopTech picked had to do more than prove their carbon-balance sheets actually balance, according to conference volunteer Michele Bowman, a [blogger](#) and business consultant by trade. Bowman works to calculate and offset carbon impact for the conference.

"We wanted to feature projects that are accelerating the impact of world-changing ideas and people," she said. "These are not Catholic-like [indulgences](#) to offset your carbon just because you can afford to. These projects allow you to make a fundamental change in someone's life in another part of the world. "A representative for environmental watchdog [Earth Policy Institute](#) called the three organizations "very worthy of receiving donations as part of PopTech's carbon-offset project."

The effort is in keeping with the 10-year-old annual conference's focus on technology's manifold influences on society. This year's 39 speakers and performers range from an Iraqi civil rights activist to an internet microfinance expert to the head of the Nigerian space program. PopTech 2007 runs Wednesday through Saturday in Camden, Maine, with [live video feeds](#) carrying the conference proceedings. (Wired News is covering the event Thursday through Saturday on the [Underwire blog](#)).

The initiative "is an important precursor to something that certainly could happen in the future -- a real, personal carbon-credits marketplace," said Zoll, who will announce the PopTech Carbon Initiative at the conference Thursday. The project was set up to give PopTech participants an easy way to buy carbon offsets, but "anyone with an eBay user ID will also be able to participate," said eBay spokeswoman Catherine England. She said the initiative is just the latest entry in the online-auction company's [Giving Works](#). The contributions program has raised \$100 million for charitable causes since its 2003 inception.

Although PopTech ends Saturday, PopTech's eBay page is slated to remain open through the end of the year. "This is the first time we're doing it, and it's the first time eBay's doing it," Bowman said. "It's a big experiment for both of us." The eBay experiment builds on PopTech's more limited carbon-footprint-reduction effort of a year ago. PopTech officials calculated the carbon-dioxide emissions generated by 530 participants' travel and lodging last October, then invested in twice that amount of carbon savings produced by a rural solar-energy project in Benin. The \$10,000 investment effectively rendered the conference [carbon-negative](#), PopTech organizers said.

Fonte: http://www.wired.com/science/planetearth/news/2007/10/poptech_walkup