

# Renewable Energy Certificates



A guide for business buyers

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Renewable Energy Certificates are the recognized standard for renewable electricity claims. Below are the questions business buyers ask us most often.

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## What is a Renewable Energy Certificate (REC)?

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A Renewable Energy Certificate - or REC (pronounced "rĕk") - is a market-based instrument that represents the property rights to the environmental, social, and other non-power attributes of renewable electricity generation. One REC is issued for every megawatt-hour (MWh) of electricity generated and delivered to the grid from a renewable energy source, such as wind, solar, or hydropower.

In practical terms, purchasing a REC is how businesses claim the environmental benefit of renewable electricity - even if that clean energy wasn't generated at their location or used directly by them. It's the recognized standard for renewable energy claims across voluntary and compliance markets alike. [Source: EPA.gov]

BEF offers a range of REC products to meet different needs and markets, including Green-e National RECs, Pacific Northwest (PACNW) RECs, WECC RECs, and International Energy Attribute Certificates (EACs).

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## What is the difference between a REC and a Carbon credit?

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While both are market-based environmental instruments, RECs and carbon credits are fundamentally different in four key ways:

1. Unit of measure. RECs are measured in megawatt-hours (MWh) of renewable electricity generated. Carbon credits are measured in metric tonnes of greenhouse gases (CO<sub>2</sub>e) reduced or removed.
2. Source. RECs are always generated by renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, or hydropower. Carbon credits can come from a much wider range of project types, including forestry, landfill gas capture, energy efficiency, and renewable energy projects as well.
3. Claims. When you purchase a REC, you are claiming the use of renewable electricity. When you purchase a carbon credit, you are claiming a reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions. These are distinct claims and should not be used interchangeably.
4. Additionality. Carbon credits are required to meet additionality criteria, meaning the emissions reductions must not have occurred without the carbon market. RECs are not subject to the same requirement.

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If you are unsure which product is right for your sustainability goals, our team is happy to help. Reach out at [customerservice@b-e-f.org](mailto:customerservice@b-e-f.org).

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### **Is my REC purchase a donation? Is my purchase tax deductible?**

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BEF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which means contributions made to us may be tax deductible under federal law.

However, the tax treatment of a Renewable Energy Certificate purchase depends on a few factors, including whether your payment qualifies as a charitable contribution or a business expense, whether you received any goods or services in return, and your individual tax situation. A claim, such as matching your carbon footprint, may count as receiving a good or service. BEF cannot provide you with tax advice and you should always consult your own tax advisor.

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### **What are Stacked Renewable Energy Certificates?**

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As a nonprofit, BEF directs a portion of the revenue from every REC sale to support our organization's mission impact programs and operational expenses.

A Stacked REC takes this a step further. When you choose a Stacked REC, you designate which specific BEF program a percentage of the sales revenue will support — giving you the combined benefit of a verified REC and a direct contribution to a BEF program you care about.

A percentage of your purchase is directed to the program you select, and the underlying REC is sourced from our verified portfolio and retired on your behalf.

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### **Can you help my company create a custom portfolio of RECs based on our budget or other criteria?**

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Absolutely. Our team works directly with businesses to build REC portfolios tailored to your budget, sustainability goals, and values. Whether you're looking to prioritize specific project types — like wind, solar, or low-impact hydro — or align your credits with particular geographies or certification standards, we'll help you find the right mix. Reach out to us to start the conversation.

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### **What does it mean for a REC to be retired?**

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Retirement is the final step in the tradeable life of a REC. When a credit is retired, it is permanently removed from the market in a public registry, ensuring it can never be resold or claimed by anyone else. This is what makes your environmental claim exclusive and verifiable — proof that the environmental benefit has been used once, by you, and only you.

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### **What can I expect after I place my REC order?**

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Once you place an order, pay your invoice, and the RECs are secure in our portfolio, you'll receive a certificate documenting the key details of your RECs — including the project name and description, volume, registry, and

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vintage. But our support doesn't stop there. BEF's team is available for ongoing customer service to answer questions about your purchase, help you understand how to use and report your credits, and provide guidance on making accurate environmental claims. We want to make sure you feel confident communicating the impact of your purchase to your stakeholders, customers, and team.

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### **Does BEF help develop new REC projects?**

BEF's role in the market is as a trusted advisor and retailer, not a project developer. We carefully vet and source credits from a network of developers and wholesalers around the world, which allows us to offer a diverse portfolio of high-quality projects across many types, geographies, and certification standards. This independence means we're focused entirely on finding the right credits for you.

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### **My company is issuing an RFP for RECs. How do I ask you to participate?**

We welcome the opportunity to respond to RFPs for RECs. Please send your RFP or any related inquiries to [customerservice@b-e-f.org](mailto:customerservice@b-e-f.org) and a member of our team will get back to you promptly.

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### **Do you have a minimum purchase volume?**

Not at all — we believe every business, regardless of size, deserves access to high-quality environmental credits and personalized service. You have the option to work with our team or purchase any amount directly through our self-service web store at any time. That said, if you're planning to purchase more than 1,000 credits of any kind, we encourage you to connect with us first so we can ensure you get the right mix of products, pricing, and support.

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### **I need to purchase RECs from other countries, can you provide international RECs?**

Yes! BEF can source international Energy Attribute Certificates (EACs), the global equivalent of RECs, from most countries that have established EAC programs. Availability varies by country and market, so we encourage you to reach out to our team at [customerservice@b-e-f.org](mailto:customerservice@b-e-f.org) to discuss your specific needs and we will do our best to find the right product for you.

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### **Can I purchase RECs for more than one year at a time?**

Yes! BEF offers multi-year and forward purchasing options for customers who prefer to plan ahead. If you are interested in a multi-year purchase, please reach out to us at [customerservice@b-e-f.org](mailto:customerservice@b-e-f.org) to discuss the options available to you.

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### **Do you help with certifications or compliance such as LEED, RE100, AB1305, Change Climate, and others?**

BEF offers products that are designed to meet the requirements of many certification and compliance frameworks. We are happy to provide information about our products and how they may align with your goals.

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However, BEF does not provide consulting services on certifications or compliance schemes themselves. It is the responsibility of the customer to ensure that their purchase meets the specific requirements of the certification or compliance framework they are submitting to. We recommend consulting with your certifying body or a qualified certification advisor if you have questions about your particular compliance obligations.

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## 14 **My company wants to contribute to habitat conservation projects that go beyond our GHG emissions. How can BEF help my company do more to give back?**

BEF's mission goes well beyond carbon. Through our BEF Watersheds program, we work with partners across the Pacific Northwest to restore and revitalize critical freshwater ecosystems — supporting fish habitat, riparian restoration, and the communities that depend on healthy watersheds.

One of the easiest ways to extend your impact is through our Stacked Credits. When you purchase a Stacked Carbon Credit or REC, you can designate a percentage of the sale revenue directly to a BEF program like Tree Planting or Salmon and Floodplain Recovery — so every credit you retire also funds on-the-ground conservation work. It's a simple way to go beyond your emissions footprint and invest in the ecosystems that matter to your company and your stakeholders.

If you'd like to explore how BEF Watersheds or other programs align with your sustainability goals, we'd love to connect.

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## 15 **My company wants to contribute to Community benefitting renewable energy projects that go beyond our GHG emissions. How can BEF help my company do more to give back?**

BEF's commitment to clean energy extends well beyond certificates. Through our BEF Renewables program, we partner with utilities, Tribal communities, and a large variety of other organizations to deploy renewable energy at scale — from community-scale solar installations to innovative clean energy projects that benefit the people and places that need it most. Our Community Solar program goes further, delivering the economic and environmental benefits of solar directly to low-income and Tribal communities.

A simple way to connect your REC or carbon credit purchases to this work is through our Stacked Credits. When you choose a Stacked product, you can designate a percentage of the sale revenue to support programs like these — so your purchase does double duty, retiring a verified credit while funding on-the-ground clean energy impact.

If you'd like to learn more about how your company can support community-benefitting renewable energy, please reach out to [customerservice@b-e-f.org](mailto:customerservice@b-e-f.org).

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## 16 **What can I say about my purchase?**

There are general best practices for how to communicate your REC purchase accurately and credibly, and the specifics can vary depending on the type and volume of credits you've purchased. Our team is always happy to provide personalized guidance for your specific situation. Reach out to us at [customerservice@b-e-f.org](mailto:customerservice@b-e-f.org) with any questions.

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**My event needs an environmental sponsor. Who should I contact at BEF?**

We would love to help! BEF has served as a carbon credit, renewable energy and/or water restoration sponsor for a wide range of events, from leading sustainability conferences including Trellis, GreenBiz, Sustainable Brands, Green Sports Alliance Summit, and Music Sustainability Alliance Summit, to events across many other sectors and industries. Whether your event is focused on sustainability or not, we are always open to exploring sponsorship opportunities that align with our mission of advancing water and environmental stewardship. Please reach out to us at [customerservice@b-e-f.org](mailto:customerservice@b-e-f.org) and we will be happy to talk through the possibilities with you.

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