



Forests and Soils Still Favored CDR Method But May Fall Short

By Mark Fogarty

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) should urgently strengthen its reporting requirements on long-term national climate strategies, say Harry B. Smith and Naomi Vaughan, academics from the University of East Anglia.

The two addressed a recent “Scrubbing the Skies” seminar by the Institute for Carbon Removal Law and Policy and also published a paper on the subject with Johanna Forster in *Communications Earth & Environment*.

In the paper and at the session,

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-- Wil Burns

moderated by Wil Burns of the Northwestern Environmental Policy and Culture Program, Smith and Vaughan questioned whether targets made under the UNFCCC would be met.

“The deployment of carbon dioxide removal is essential to reach global and national net-zero emissions targets, but little attention has been paid to its practical deployment by countries,” they wrote in the journal.

The scholars surveyed 41 of the 50 Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategies submitted to UNFCCC and found enhancing forest and soil carbon sinks are the most advocated strategies but are only explicitly quantified in 12 of them.

“Residual emissions by 2050 are only quantified in 20 strategies and most of them use forests to achieve national net-zero targets,” the two reported.

Among listed obstacles are, “wildfire risks to forests and limited geological CO2 storage capacity.”

Introducing the webinar, Burns said “It’s far from clear how CDR is being incorporated into the primary long term international instrument to address

climate change, the Paris agreement, or how this should be facilitated.”

Smith said CDR has three roles in national governance: accelerating near-term mitigation, compensating for hard to abate emissions to achieve net-zero, and to help countries go net negative.

Countries that achieve net-zero, followed by net-negative, will allow developing countries to de-carbonize more gradually.

So far, 57 countries (many in the European Union) have formulated Long Term Low Emissions Development Strategies (LT-LEDS), he said, though there is no formal requirement for countries to produce these.

“This is becoming a norm on the national level for carbon reporting,” he said.

Residual emissions are quantified in 20 of the nations, Smith said, and in 13 of them increased forest carbon, or nature-based CDR, is solely or largely relied upon to compensate for emissions.

Developing strong monitoring, reporting, and verification will help grow more reliable carbon markets.

