

Forests, carbon sinks, cannot make up for delays in decarbonizing the economy: study

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To stabilize the Earth's climate for people and ecosystems, it is imperative to ramp up natural climate solutions and, at the same time, accelerate mitigation efforts across the energy and industrial sectors, according to a new policy perspective published today in *Science*. Among their findings, the researchers warn that a ten-year delay in emissions reductions from energy and industry could this century result in emissions that negate the net potential emissions reductions benefit of natural climate solutions.

Natural climate solutions —such as enhancing carbon sinks from forests, agriculture and other lands—come with a host of benefits like improved forests, croplands, grazing lands, and wetlands. The paper, co-authored by scientists and climate experts at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies, Columbia University, Kepos Capital, Princeton University, University of Aberdeen, Stanford University, and World Wildlife Fund (WWF), underscores that natural climate solutions alone are not enough to meet the Paris Agreement and must be paired with rapid efforts to decrease emissions from the energy and industrial sectors.

"This is not an either-or situation. We need to be actively pursuing all possible solutions in all possible places," said co-author Christopher B. Field, a climate scientist who directs the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment. "Even ambitious deployment of natural climate solutions leaves a big gap that needs to be filled through increased work on decreasing emissions from cars, factories, and powerplants."

"By maximizing natural climate solutions and energy mitigation, we can improve forests and habitat, reduce the risk of wildfires, and decrease air and [water pollution](#), thus improving [human health](#) and well-being as well as the health of our planet," said Christa M. Anderson, lead author and research fellow with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

To reduce cumulative emissions and peak warming, the policy paper underscores that the solution will require policy mechanisms and incentives that support natural climate solutions and a major increase in [mitigation efforts](#) across the energy and industrial sectors.

The article, Natural Climate Solutions Are Not Enough, appears in the March 1 edition of *Science*.

More information: "Natural climate solutions are not enough" *Science* (2019).

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