# Scientists urge greater integration of natural climate solutions to accelerate emissions reductions



A coalition of climate scientists is urging global regulators to broaden the role of natural climate solutions (NCS) within climate mitigation frameworks, cautioning that restrictive policies excluding these nature-based interventions could undermine efforts to urgently reduce emissions. In a letter addressed to the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi) and the United Nations’ Article 6.4 Supervisory Body, the group warns against the growing preference for engineered carbon removal technologies at the expense of proven natural approaches, which they argue are being unfairly discounted over concerns about permanence and risk of carbon reversals such as forest fires.

According to the scientists, natural climate solutions such as reforestation, peatland restoration, and soil carbon management represent approximately 28% of the world’s high-confidence, cost-effective mitigation potential, based on the 2023 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report. Yet, many recent policy proposals diminish the importance of NCS citing fears that carbon stored naturally can be released back into the atmosphere. The authors contend this rigidity is counterproductive, noting that managing such risks is feasible and common in other sectors like flood insurance and health policy.

They advocate for recognising the value of temporary carbon removals delivered by NCS, which can help reduce peak warming and provide critical time needed for engineered carbon removal technologies to develop and scale. Unlike many engineered options still constrained by cost and infrastructure gaps, NCS are scalable, cost-effective, and deliver substantial co-benefits, including enhanced biodiversity, improved water quality, and ecosystem resilience.

The letter proposes integrating NCS into emerging standards on residual emissions, particularly within beyond value chain mitigation (BVCM) and Scope 3 reduction targets. This pragmatic portfolio approach acknowledges that natural and technological carbon removals should be complementary rather than seen in competition. The scientists warn that without timely inclusion of nature-based solutions, the global climate strategy risks sidelining a vital, near-term tool for achieving emissions reductions.

Backing this perspective, organisations like the National Wildlife Federation have long championed natural climate solutions as integral to climate mitigation and resilience strategies, emphasising actions such as conserving forests, restoring wetlands, and sustainable land management to boost carbon sequestration while supporting biodiversity. Similarly, the National Audubon Society highlights how conserving and restoring critical habitats — forests, grasslands, and wetlands — not only sequesters carbon but also bolsters wildlife and ecosystem health.

Industry actors like the Oil and Gas Climate Initiative (OGCI) also recognise the potential of NCS, promoting projects especially in biodiverse regions such as Brazil. They focus on harmonising carbon accounting standards and collaborating with international organisations to ensure the integrity and scalability of high-quality NCS carbon credit projects, which complements broader climate goals.

Scientific research further supports these calls. A study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences identifies twenty conservation and land management actions that could provide over a third of the cost-effective mitigation needed by 2030 to stabilize warming below 2°C. McKinsey & Company’s analysis estimates that natural climate solutions could remove up to seven gigatons of CO2 annually by the end of the decade, accounting for nearly one-third of the mitigation required under the Paris Agreement’s 1.5°C scenario.

To maximise impact while safeguarding environmental and social outcomes, organisations like The Nature Conservancy advocate adhering to five science-based principles for implementing NCS. These ensure that efforts result from responsible ecosystem stewardship, sustain biodiversity and food production, provide durable climate mitigation, are measurable, and respect human rights and Indigenous self-determination.

Overall, the evolving consensus calls for a balanced climate strategy where natural climate solutions play an essential—and not sidelined—role alongside technological removals. Recognising their unique scalability, cost-effectiveness, and multiple co-benefits, policymakers are urged to integrate NCS more fully into climate frameworks to mobilise their full potential in the critical near term, while continuing to develop engineered solutions for longer-term climate security.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://carbonherald.com/scientists-call-for-broader-role-for-natural-solutions-in-climate-policy/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=scientists-call-for-broader-role-for-natural-solutions-in-climate-policy)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://carbonherald.com/scientists-call-for-broader-role-for-natural-solutions-in-climate-policy/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=scientists-call-for-broader-role-for-natural-solutions-in-climate-policy)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://carbonherald.com/scientists-call-for-broader-role-for-natural-solutions-in-climate-policy/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=scientists-call-for-broader-role-for-natural-solutions-in-climate-policy)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://carbonherald.com/scientists-call-for-broader-role-for-natural-solutions-in-climate-policy/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=scientists-call-for-broader-role-for-natural-solutions-in-climate-policy), [[6]](https://www.mckinsey.com/our-insights/what-are-natural-climate-solutions)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://carbonherald.com/scientists-call-for-broader-role-for-natural-solutions-in-climate-policy/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=scientists-call-for-broader-role-for-natural-solutions-in-climate-policy), [[2]](https://www.nwf.org/Our-Work/Climate/Climate-Change/Policy/Natural-Solutions), [[4]](https://www.audubon.org/our-work/climate/natural-climate-solutions)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://carbonherald.com/scientists-call-for-broader-role-for-natural-solutions-in-climate-policy/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=scientists-call-for-broader-role-for-natural-solutions-in-climate-policy), [[3]](https://www.ogci.com/natural-climate-solutions)
* Paragraph 7 – [[7]](https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1710465114), [[6]](https://www.mckinsey.com/our-insights/what-are-natural-climate-solutions)
* Paragraph 8 – [[5]](https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-insights/perspectives/ncs-principles/)
* Paragraph 9 – [[1]](https://carbonherald.com/scientists-call-for-broader-role-for-natural-solutions-in-climate-policy/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=scientists-call-for-broader-role-for-natural-solutions-in-climate-policy), [[6]](https://www.mckinsey.com/our-insights/what-are-natural-climate-solutions), [[7]](https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1710465114), [[2]](https://www.nwf.org/Our-Work/Climate/Climate-Change/Policy/Natural-Solutions), [[3]](https://www.ogci.com/natural-climate-solutions), [[4]](https://www.audubon.org/our-work/climate/natural-climate-solutions), [[5]](https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-insights/perspectives/ncs-principles/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://carbonherald.com/scientists-call-for-broader-role-for-natural-solutions-in-climate-policy/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=scientists-call-for-broader-role-for-natural-solutions-in-climate-policy> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.nwf.org/Our-Work/Climate/Climate-Change/Policy/Natural-Solutions> - The National Wildlife Federation advocates for natural climate solutions (NCS) as essential components in climate change mitigation and resilience strategies. NCS encompass actions like conserving forests, restoring wetlands, and implementing sustainable land management to enhance carbon sequestration and bolster ecosystem health. The Federation's policy platform outlines recommendations to scale up NCS, emphasizing their role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and supporting biodiversity. By integrating NCS into climate policies, the Federation aims to address environmental challenges while promoting sustainable practices across various ecosystems.
3. <https://www.ogci.com/natural-climate-solutions> - The Oil and Gas Climate Initiative (OGCI) highlights the significance of natural climate solutions (NCS) in mitigating climate change. NCS involve enhancing the capacity of natural systems, such as oceans, forests, and soils, to absorb carbon dioxide. OGCI's strategy focuses on supporting NCS initiatives, particularly in regions like Brazil, to accelerate the adoption of high-quality carbon credits. By harmonizing accounting guidelines and collaborating with organizations like IETA, OGCI aims to strengthen the integrity and scalability of NCS projects, contributing to global climate goals.
4. <https://www.audubon.org/our-work/climate/natural-climate-solutions> - The National Audubon Society emphasizes the role of natural climate solutions (NCS) in combating climate change and biodiversity loss. NCS include conserving and restoring critical habitats such as forests, grasslands, and wetlands, which act as carbon sinks and support wildlife. Audubon's initiatives focus on policy advocacy, on-the-ground conservation projects, and promoting bird-friendly practices in working lands. By integrating NCS into climate strategies, Audubon seeks to enhance ecosystem resilience and address environmental challenges through nature-based approaches.
5. <https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-insights/perspectives/ncs-principles/> - The Nature Conservancy outlines five science-based principles for implementing natural climate solutions (NCS). These principles emphasize that NCS should result from human stewardship of ecosystems, sustain biodiversity and food production, provide additional and durable climate mitigation, be measurable, and respect human rights and Indigenous self-determination. By adhering to these principles, NCS projects can effectively contribute to global climate mitigation efforts while promoting environmental sustainability and social equity.
6. <https://www.mckinsey.com/our-insights/what-are-natural-climate-solutions> - McKinsey & Company defines natural climate solutions (NCS) as nature-based actions that reduce or sequester greenhouse gas emissions. NCS encompass strategies like reforestation, wetland restoration, and sustainable agriculture to enhance carbon storage and mitigate climate change. McKinsey highlights that NCS can potentially remove up to seven gigatons of carbon dioxide per year by the end of the decade, representing nearly one-third of the mitigation needed to achieve the 1.5°C pathway outlined in the Paris Agreement. Additionally, NCS offer co-benefits such as improved biodiversity and soil health.
7. <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1710465114> - A study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) examines the potential of natural climate solutions (NCS) in mitigating climate change. The research identifies 20 conservation, restoration, and improved land management actions across global forests, wetlands, grasslands, and agricultural lands that can increase carbon storage and avoid greenhouse gas emissions. The study concludes that NCS can provide over one-third of the cost-effective climate mitigation needed between now and 2030 to stabilize warming to below 2°C, alongside aggressive fossil fuel emissions reductions.