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Ecological Restoration: A Global Strategy For Mitigating Climate Change

ScienceDaily (Aug. 21, 2007) — The Society for Ecological Restoration International (SER) issued a position statement on global climate change during its joint conference with the Ecological Society of America (ESA) "Ecological Restoration in a Changing World" held recently in San Jose, CA. The SER position statement was endorsed by the ESA governing board. An estimated 4,500 people attended the meeting.

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The position statement calls attention to the vital role played by terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in supporting humanity, and the need to protect and restore these habitats in order to mitigate global climate change and its effects. The overwhelming scientific consensus is that climate change is a real threat that requires immediate action. Changes in land use and the subsequent loss of biodiversity are a significant contributing factor to global climate change.

"The loss of vital ecosystem functions and services reduces biological resilience and adaptability, further increasing our vulnerability to the adverse impacts of global climate change," said Keith Bowers, outgoing Chair of SER. "Ecological restoration is a critical tool in addressing global climate change, enhancing the extent and functioning of carbon sinks as well as reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

"SER strongly urges local, regional, and national governments, international development banks and non-governmental organizations as well as private institutions to plan, finance, and coordinate ecological restoration projects and programs as part of a comprehensive global strategy for mitigating climate change and its effects," said the SER statement. Accordingly, "...developed nations should actively support restoration programs throughout the world by providing financial support, sharing technology and committing expertise."

"Unless checked, global climate change will destroy people, places, and life as we know it. Ecological restoration offers hope in two key areas: by reconnecting fragmented ecosystems allowing animals and plants to migrate in response to such change; and, by capturing carbon through the restoration of forests, peat-forming wetlands, and other ecosystems that act as carbon sinks," said George Gann, incoming Chair of SER. "Protecting what we have is still important, but no longer sufficient," added Jim Harris, SER's Science and Policy Working Group Chair.

SER statement

The overwhelming scientific consensus is that global climate change is a real and immediate threat that requires action. Defined as an intentional activity that initiates or accelerates the recovery of an ecosystem with respect to its functions, integrity, and sustainability, ecological restoration is one of many tools that can help mitigate climate change.

Humanity depends upon the services provided by ecosystems. These services include products such as food and timber, regulating services such as carbon sequestration, disease control, and flood protection, and cultural benefits, such as places to recreate. As an example of a regulating service, forests remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and sequester it in their biomass, thereby capturing a gas that contributes to global climate change. In order to continue to obtain ecosystem services, terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems need to be protected and, where possible, restored.

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ecosystems and to plan, finance and coordinate ecological restoration projects and programs as part of a comprehensive global strategy for mitigating climate change and its effects.

Developed nations should actively support restoration programs throughout the world by providing financial support, sharing technology and committing expertise.

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