

# CLIMATE PROGRESS

## On the eve of landmark climate manipulation conference, chief sponsor moves to quell criticism

March 22, 2010

Sometimes blog posts have immediate impacts. On Thursday, March 18, I wrote a piece on the Climate Response Fund that reflected concerns raised to me by many leading climate experts: "[Exclusive: Chief sponsor of landmark climate manipulation conference maintains close financial ties to controversial geo-engineering company.](#)"

CRF's Board responded with a [statement](#) on Friday, specifically addressing these concerns:

... the Climate Response Fund exists to fund conferences, dialogues and discussions about climate intervention, and to assist in conveying the results of such deliberations to all parties interested in mitigating climate change.

**To be absolutely clear, Climate Response Fund will not fund field experiments for any climate intervention technique now or in the future including, but not limited to, ocean fertilization, solar radiation management by stratospheric aerosols, tropospheric aerosols, adding alkalinity to the ocean or any other particular climate mitigation techniques.**

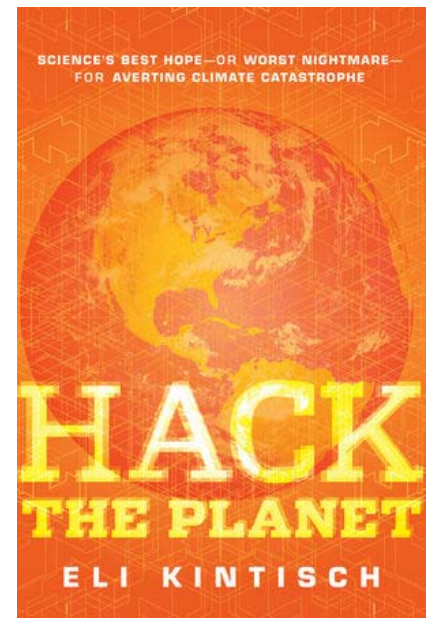
That is the unequivocal statement many had been looking for, to eliminate the appearance that the nonprofit helping to shape the norms and guidelines for geo-engineering experiments had a potential financial interest in the outcome.

How important is this statement?

Eli Kintisch, reporter for *Science* magazine, has a forthcoming book on geo-engineering, *Hack the Planet*, which discusses CRF (run by Margaret Leinen) and its relationship to the firm Climos (run by her son, Dan Whaley, with her, formerly, as its chief scientific officer). Climos had been pursuing a doubly dubious scheme to perform ocean iron fertilization experiments and sell carbon offsets for them (see "[Rule Three of Offsets: No Geo-engineering](#)").

On page 147, Kintisch writes that after Climos decided to abandoned the idea of selling offsets for their geoengineering scheme:

**Instead, Leinen founded a nonprofit organization, the Climate Response Fund (CRF), to raise money for geo-engineering, hiring a well-connected fund-raiser in California named Danielle Guttman-Klein to do so. Headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, the organization had an unclear connection to Climos. Leinen said the two were completely separate, and that she had no financial stake in the company. Whaley told me in the spring of 2009 that "appropriate conflict of interest controls were in place" but that the organization would financially support**



**any iron fertilization experiments that Climos helped organize. “CRF will fund the researchers directly,”** he told me. “Climos will handle the logistics.”

I spoke to Kintisch over the weekend, and he stands by that reporting. So CRF has clearly changed its mission dramatically, which is a good thing.

CRF has also made the decision to sever its relationship with William Kohrs, “who handled CRF’s fiscal administration on a part-time basis for the conference” and who is “also VP Finance and Administration of Climos, Inc.”

Geo-engineering expert David Keith, who was among those who raised concerns about the CRF-Climos connection, cc’d me on an email to Leinen Sunday:

The board statement clarifies the goals of CRF. These goals seem admirable and entirely appropriate for an organization sponsoring a meeting like Asilomar. For my part, they answer the questions central I raised in my correspondence with Joe Romm.

This relieves my concerns about attending the meeting.

Thank you very much for this.

Of course, it still looks “awful” the [sole “Strategic Partner” of landmark geo-engineering conference is Australia’s “dirty coal” state of Victoria.](#)

And the few plausible geo-engineering schemes remain very, very dubious, and offer no serious prospect of viability absent very aggressive mitigation (see [Caldeira calls the vision of Lomborg’s Climate Consensus “a dystopic world out of a science fiction story”](#)) — and very possibly not even with aggressive mitigation, a point I’ll discuss shortly.

Related Posts:

- [Science: “Optimism about a geoengineered ‘easy way out’ should be tempered by examination of currently observed climate changes”](#)
- [British coal industry flack pushes geo-engineering “ploy” to give politicians “viable reason to do nothing” about global warming.](#)

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This entry was posted by [Joe](#) on Monday, March 22nd, 2010 at 10:34 am and is filed under [Geoengineering](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.

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## 5 Responses to “On the eve of landmark climate manipulation conference, chief sponsor moves to quell criticism”

1. *John McCormick* says:

[March 22, 2010 at 11:07 am](#)

There is no geo-engineering scheme that can be mentioned, conceived, crafted, launched or even dreamed that is designed to diminish the increasing ocean acidity.

Losing or lessening the CO2 sink capacity of the earth’s ocean is the path to a runaway climate accelerated by the

positive feed backs (permafrost and lost albedo at the North and South Poles) the earth will suffer along that path to total extinction of all life forms.

The Asilomar conference sponsors may have issued their clarification of no close ties with the geo-engineering corporate interests but that is overshadowed by the prestige it will give those very interests. I have no doubt the agenda is set up to kick the legs out from under the geo-engineers. "We do not come to bury geo-engineering" We come to assess it."

The environmental groups (NRDC and EDF) are not being tasked with leading the discussion to oppose geo as the preferred alternative to mitigation. They have been invited to be used as props.

John McCormick

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2. *Len Ornstein* says:

[March 22, 2010 at 1:41 pm](#)

John McCormick is in error:

8 to 13 GtC/yr 'new' bio-sequestration, as in (free pdfs):

<http://www.springerlink.com/openurl.asp?genre=article&id=doi:10.1007/s10584-009-9626-y>

and

<http://www.springerlink.com/openurl.asp?genre=article&id=doi:10.1007/s10584-009-9625-z>

could PROFOUNDLY reduce ocean acidification as well as 'stop' global warming and simultaneously provide negative, or near-zero, carbon footprint fuel – and feedstock for synthetics – for sustaining prosperous world economies.

It wouldn't be easy – but it's POSSIBLE!

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3. *John McCormick* says:

[March 22, 2010 at 1:50 pm](#)

And I can climb to the summit of Mt. Everest (I'm over 60)...

It wouldn't be easy – but it's POSSIBLE???

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4. *David B. Benson* says:

[March 22, 2010 at 5:51 pm](#)

*Oldest Person to Climb: age 76, Mr. Min Bahadur Sherchan of Nepal*

*Second Rupper Up:*

*was a 71 Year Old Japanese Katsusuke Yanagisawa, a teacher by profession.*

from

<http://www.nepalvista.com/travel/efacts.html>

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5. *Lewis Cleverdon* says:

[March 22, 2010 at 8:07 pm](#)

John – it may be no more than a difference of terminology between us, but IMHO the geo-engineering option of airborne carbon recovery via 'Afforestation for biochar, energy, and biodiversity' offers a substantial prospect of

decelerating, and eventually reversing, ocean acidification.

I'd agree with your premis that failure to control acidification would advance the feedbacks' acceleration by cutting the oceans' capacity as carbon sinks. Yet it is now plain that even serious GHG cuts, say a global 50% off 1990 by 2050, would not avoid greatly raising the oceans' acidity. Thus a global carbon recovery program is arguably a necessity for the defence of this sink, let alone for cutting global temperature and decelerating the feedbacks, let alone for defending marine life and its dependents (i.e. us & other terrestrial species).

The afforestation that I've been urging for some years is more mundane than the visionary desert reclamation project that Len Ornstein describes above (which might well play a vital role in raising the rate of carbon recovery). My first interest is in the 900 Mha.s of degraded, steep and unworkable soils recently identified as being available for forestry without affecting agriculture, and my second interest is in perhaps another 100 Mha.s with a large potential benefit to farming communities worldwide in integrating a matrix of forestry with farms for woodlots, shelter-belts, orchards, forest-gardens, fodder-trees, hedgrows and, of course, agroforestry techniques.

There is no rationale for assuming that a global carbon recovery program could substitute for stringent GHG output cuts – while the areas available for afforestation are finite and are fully required for recovery of the current excess airborne carbon, reserves of fossil fuels (including the usual culprits and 'exotics' like tar-sands, methane hydrates & ex-permafrost peat) are so vast as to outweigh any possible carbon recovery program if their BAU usage is not rapidly ended.

I would assure you that it is not my preference to be advocating geo-engineering: having failed to get sufficient GHG cuts adopted to date, I only do so due to the lack of a cogent explanation as to how the accelerating feedbacks could now be controlled by GHG cuts alone. Society missed that window of opportunity: it is over.

In this context, it needs saying that the decades required for even a global emergency program of afforestation to significantly reduce airborne CO2 ppmv, plus the time lag for that to affect global temperature, means that at least one benign form of planetary albedo enhancement has to be applied successfully to decelerate the feedbacks while the carbon recovery program is gaining momentum.

Therefore, I'd congratulate Joe on adroitly raising the conference's credibility, and I wish the scientists and others attending the best of success

1/. in identifying and describing lucidly the necessary and sufficient roles of geo-engineering, and  
2/. in drafting an open discussion document on criteria for selecting candidate options for research prior to field trials.

Perhaps it also needs saying that : "TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE !"

Regards,

Lewis

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