

Proposal for formation of the Aotearoa Marine Carbon Forum

Should our ocean be part of the solution to climate change?

The ocean has absorbed one-third of all the carbon dioxide we've emitted to date and, with the current ambition on reducing emissions, there is considerable international interest (and finance) in enhancing this marine sink. Our large Exclusive Economic Zone represents a potential opportunity to make a meaningful commitment to the Paris Agreement goals, whilst also reducing expenditure and reliance on offshore carbon credits and forestry. However, marine Carbon Dioxide Removal (mCDR) techniques, including coastal Blue Carbon, open ocean fertilization and liming, have inherent risks and also challenges of scaling up and permanence. Consequently, a carefully considered national strategy is required to assess their pros and cons, so maximising the use of Aotearoa New Zealand research, funding and resources whilst reducing atmospheric carbon dioxide and maintaining marine ecosystem resilience.

Vision

An informed and robust assessment of the potential role of Aotearoa New Zealand's coastal seas and oceans that includes a mātauranga Māori (te Ao Māori and tikanga) approach in our climate change response.

Purpose

The forum will provide independent evidence-based analysis of the potential of nature-based solutions for capturing and storing carbon in Aotearoa's coastal waters and ocean. The forum will facilitate co-ordination and collaboration within and across sectors (research, policy, government, private sector), and with Iwi/Māori, on carbon sequestration and burial in Aotearoa's marine environment. This will inform the development of a national strategy for assessing the relative merits and risks of different techniques, that will ensure joint benefits of optimal carbon dioxide removal and increased resilience of marine ecosystems.

High level objectives of the forum

- Develop a marine carbon removal strategy for Aotearoa that includes a mātauranga Māori (te Ao Māori and tikanga) approach that respects Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles to ensure the considered delivery of national and international climate and biodiversity objectives.
- Enhance the evidence base surrounding the diverse carbon dioxide removal approaches that exist in Aotearoa's territorial sea and EEZ, including those beyond the 2013 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Wetlands Supplement.
- Connect marine carbon experts and kaitiaki from research institutions, Iwi/Māori, non-government organisations, civil society, public bodies and the New Zealand Government, so providing a platform for researchers to provide evidence-based advice directly to policy makers and also for the Government to engage efficiently with researchers.
- Share information, data and knowledge on marine carbon removal approaches, so that research direction and policy development can be aligned for valued implementation across sectors.
- Provide a point of contact to similar fora internationally, and a staging point for Aotearoa to collaborate on multi-national initiatives.

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