# **REPORT FROM THE AIR: CAN WE RESTORE OUR CLIMATE?**

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Can we restore our climate? Peter Fiekowsky, a keynote speaker at the 2020 Conference for Global Transformation, answered that question, saying, "Yes, we can restore the climate," and he told us how. I was so inspired and, for the first time in many years, was spurred into action on climate. I had recently retired from a career as an environmental attorney for the federal government and the State of California enforcing environmental laws. I was in the inquiry of what to take on in my retirement. Peter Fiekowsky answered my question.

What happened next? Peter told us about the organization he co-founded: The Foundation for Climate Restoration.<sup>1</sup> This foundation is dedicated to restoring a safe and stable climate by 2050. I had been resigned to inaction because I knew that the global political will to reduce emissions was insufficient to create a safe climate. Peter shared that we need to reduce emissions and, to create a safe climate, it is essential to remove the trillion tons of excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. In his keynote address at the conference, Peter shared that we already have the tools to restore our climate. The best methods are those that mimic natural processes to remove the excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Following the conference, I started speaking to my friends and family about the promise of climate restoration and attending the foundation's chapter meetings. Then I read the book Peter wrote with Carole Douglis called, "Climate Restoration: The Only Future That Will Sustain the Human Race." This book lays out two futures – one where we restore our climate for future generations and one where we do not. Just imagine the climate chaos if the concentrations of carbon dioxide, now at 425, rise to over 460, the level deemed acceptable by the countries of this world. It is time to take action to restore a safe climate for our grandchildren, our oceans, and our communities.

Since I heard Peter speak in 2020 and read his book, I've been sharing and sharing and sharing. Out of this network of conversations, here is what has happened:

My friends and I created a local Foundation for Climate Restoration chapter. We created videos to share. I testified in a hearing at the California State Capitol to support a climate restoration bill, which was then passed. We supported Senator Dave Cortese's Climate Restoration Senate Resolution 34 and encouraged people all over the state to support the resolution.<sup>2</sup> It was adopted without dissent. We supported students in Napa, California to lobby our representative, Mike Thompson, in the U.S. House of Representatives who had introduced House Resolution 1563 in November 2024. This resolution would formally recognize Congress' responsibility to restore a healthy climate for future generations.<sup>3</sup>

I co-founded the Ocean Iron Fertilization Alliance. We are a group of individuals in the United States and other countries committed to restoring our climate through marine

carbon dioxide removal using methods that mimic natural processes. When we created our alliance, we carefully considered our focus.<sup>4</sup>

We asked ourselves: Why the alliance? Here's why: Phytoplankton forms the base of the ocean food chain and produces about 50 percent of the oxygen we breathe. Phytoplankton is in severe decline due in part to climate change and the availability of nutrients. Iron is an essential nutrient for phytoplankton, and its availability in the ocean is diminishing due to climate change and the reduction of ocean wildlife, particularly whales. Adding minute guantities of iron or other essential nutrients to the appropriate ocean areas can help phytoplankton recover and remove large amounts of the legacy carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The additional benefits of restoring phytoplankton with ocean iron fertilization include desperately needed replenishment of ocean fisheries (e.g. salmon) and ocean mammal populations. We learned that the National Academies of Sciences, in a 2022 report, concluded that removing excess carbon dioxide in our atmosphere is essential to restoring our climate and that ocean iron fertilization and seaweed and kelp cultivation offer the most significant opportunities for biotic marine carbon dioxide removal and swift removal of excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. And, of all the methods of marine carbon dioxide removal, it is the least expensive and the easiest to scale up to remove tons of carbon dioxide.<sup>5</sup> Many other methods are in development, but most are not scalable enough to restore the climate by 2050 because they are costly and highly energy-intensive to implement, requiring extensive mining or construction.

We asked ourselves: How do we make it happen? We lobbied our members of Congress to pass legislation to carry out the recommendations of the National Academies of Sciences 2022 report by allocating funds to study the effectiveness of ocean iron fertilization and the ability to scale it up to restore our climate by 2050. We worked with the groups that were developing ocean iron fertilization projects. We continue to expand our alliance and seek out ways to make a difference.

I joined the Rotary Club to work with other Rotarians to implement Rotary International's commitment to protect the environment through climate and other actions. Rotary clubs and individuals are assisting in funding ocean iron fertilization projects. We hosted a screening of one of four documentary films called "The Climate Restorers" by John Bowey, director-producer, and Dr. Phoebe Barnard, co-producer and science-policy advisor, with voice-over by Peter Coyote.<sup>6</sup>

**I couldn't leave my family out**. My sisters and I (the McChesney sisters) created a blog we call "McSisters Tackle Plastic."<sup>7</sup> In our blog, we demonstrate our commitment to our children and grandchildren. We bring to our subscribers the devasting impacts of plastic production, use, and disposal on our health, communities, oceans, and climate. The disposal of plastic in the ocean contributes to the decline of phytoplankton and, of course, to the devastation of marine wildlife. The decline of phytoplankton limits the ability of the ocean to absorb carbon dioxide and create oxygen.<sup>8</sup> We also suggest alternatives to single-use plastic in our daily lives.

### The Breakdowns

After two years of efforts by the Ocean Iron Fertilization Alliance and others, neither Congress nor any state has enacted legislation focusing explicitly on restoring our oceans through ocean iron fertilization. Plastic production continues to increase and impact our oceans and our health.

What's next? The alliance has evaluated the sources of the breakdown in enacting climate-restoration legislation and is expanding our outreach to new allies, including legislators, scientists, and communities. We support implementing projects in several parts of the world where communities depend directly on a healthy and robust ocean. We are continuing to urge our members of Congress and state legislators to support climate restoration and the study of ocean iron fertilization. Every week, more information comes to light about the benefits of ocean iron fertilization and other related methods to help phytoplankton bloom.

Throughout this work on restoring our climate for future generations, I play bagpipes in a band and compete.

If you are reading this report, you are likely at the 2025 Conference on Global Transformation, and you can do what I did and join the conversation to restore the climate. More and more people are committed to climate restoration, and we invite you to join us.

### REFERENCES

Fiekowsky, P., with C. Douglis. 2022. Climate Restoration: The Only Future That Will Sustain the Human Race, Rivertown Books, Irvington, NY.

National Academies of Sciences, 2022. A Research Strategy for Ocean-based Carbon Dioxide Removal and Sequestration.

# ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See foundationforclimaterestoration.org.

<sup>2</sup> Read Senate Resolution 34 at legiscan.com/CA/text/SR34/id/2832828.

<sup>3</sup> Read more about House Resolution 1563 at mikethompson.house.gov/newsroom/press-releases/thompson-eshoo-carbajal-morellethanedar-napa-schools-climate-actionlead#:~:text=This%20House%20resolution%2C%20written%20in,over%20the%20next %2020%20years. <sup>4</sup> Learn more about the Ocean Iron Fertilization Alliance at oifalliance.org.

- <sup>5</sup> See nap.nationalacademies.org/read/26278.
- <sup>6</sup> See <u>www.theclimaterestorers.com</u>.
- <sup>7</sup> See our blog, <u>www.mcsisters.org</u>.

<sup>8</sup> For more discussion of why this matters, see <u>www.mcsisters.org/why-it-matters</u>.