

Viewpoint: Climate change threatens our forests. Smarter fire control and sustainable logging can help us fight back

There has been an ongoing debate about the viability of tree planting and forest restoration to fight climate change. But this debate — focused on sequestering more carbon — has neglected the many non-climate benefits of better forest management, such as clean water, wildlife conservation, and economic support for rural communities.

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[T]he concept has recently emerged as a rare point of bipartisan agreement around climate solutions. In fact, Republicans have made it a centerpiece of their current climate agenda with McCarthy's recent Trillion Trees legislation, and Democrats have highlighted the concept in many of their recent climate plans.

However, the carbon benefits of such proposals are fairly modest — due to challenges associated with carbon accounting, land use conflict, and tree planting in areas that were not previously forested

But while tree planting has its limitations, improved forest management policy is still sorely needed in the US. Such policy should recognize that the health of forests requires restoring natural fire regimes and encouraging smarter logging practices, two things that might seem antithetical to a singular goal of emissions reductions but support forests' ability to both balance legitimate competing priorities and store sequester carbon over the long term.

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