



INSTITUTE *for* CARBON REMOVAL LAW AND POLICY

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History and Mission

The [Institute for Carbon Removal Law and Policy](#) (“The Institute”) was launched in October 2018 as a research center dedicated to assessing the social, legal, ethical, and political implications of carbon removal technologies and practices. The Institute is an offshoot and partner of the [Forum for Climate Engineering Assessment](#), which, since 2013, has been conducting and catalyzing evaluation of geoengineering (including carbon removal) responses to climate change.

The Institute believes that the removal of large quantities of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere will be an essential component of humanity’s responding to climate change. However, not all forms of carbon removal are created equal, nor should carbon removal be viewed as a substitute for greenhouse gas emissions abatement. The Institute is dedicated to the hard-nosed evaluation of carbon removal proposals from the perspective of effectiveness, sustainability, equity, and social justice. We also seek to assist with the development of appropriate legal and social frameworks to accompany any carbon removal effort.

Why Pay Attention to Carbon Removal?

- ❑ The recent [special report on Global Warming of 1.5°C](#) from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change makes clear that carbon removal will almost certainly be needed as a part of humanity’s response to climate change, and perhaps at a very large scale. This confirms a key finding from their Fifth Assessment Report in 2013–2014.
- ❑ This is a nascent, dynamic field, freighted with uncertainty. As with all new arenas of technological development and exploration, the conversation tends to be dominated by boosters and naysayers. The reality is that “carbon removal” covers a sprawling array of potential technologies and practices, all of which could have positive and negative implications depending on context and policy choices. This is a complicated subject matter that necessitates sober analysis.
- ❑ Carbon removal is set to grow in visibility and importance, particularly as the US government considers the findings of a new [National Academy of Sciences report](#) arguing for a carbon removal research agenda and the international community considers carbon removal as part of rule-making under the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Staff List

Dr. Wil Burns (Co-Director)

International Law; Human Rights; Risks and Benefits of Carbon Removal Proposals; Marine Carbon Removal

Ph.D. University of Wales-Cardiff School of Law

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Wil is a leading authority on the international law pertaining to carbon removal. He is also an astute reader of the major surveys and reports in the field. Wil has published widely on the relationships between human rights and carbon removal; how the Paris Agreement on climate change may accommodate carbon removal approaches; issues of intergenerational justice as applied to carbon removal; and a range of other matters.

Wil is based in Berkeley, California. He serves as a non-residential scholar at American University's School of International Service, a Fellow at the Center for Science, Technology and Medicine in Society at the University of California-Berkeley, and a Senior Scholar at the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) in Canada. He also holds the position of Co-Chair of the [International Environmental Law Committee of the American Branch of the International Law Association](#). Wil was previously Director of the Energy Policy & Climate program at Johns Hopkins University in Washington, DC.

Dr. Simon Nicholson (Co-Director)

Global Governance; US Domestic Politics

Ph.D. American University

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Simon focuses on the big picture of where and how carbon removal may fit into the broad array of climate response options, and more narrowly on how carbon removal approaches can be evaluated and managed at the international level. He also tracks the US domestic political and NGO conversations about carbon removal.

In addition to his work with the Institute, Simon directs the [Global Environmental Politics](#) program at American University. His scholarship and public engagement, beyond his work on carbon removal, focus on emerging technologies and global food and agriculture. His books include *New Earth Politics: Essays from the Anthropocene* (with Sikina Jinnah) (MIT Press, 2016).

Dr. David Morrow (Director of Research)

Ethics; Technical Aspects of Carbon Removal

M.A. University of Chicago

Ph.D. City University of New York

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With a background in philosophy, public policy, and economics, David approaches carbon removal through the lenses of climate ethics and scenario modeling. He also takes a deep interest in the technical details of individual carbon removal approaches, including evaluations of technological readiness, cost effectiveness, and carbon removal potential.

In addition to publishing on climate ethics, David is currently studying and teaching about integrated assessment models, which are the tools scientists use to simulate the climate policy scenarios that have motivated much of the recent conversation about carbon removal. His interests in ethics and climate policy come together in his current book project, *Values in Climate Policy*. David is also a Research Fellow at the Institute for Philosophy & Public Policy at George Mason University.

Our Recent Work

Our new report, "[Why Talk About Carbon Removal?](#)", is a primer on the carbon removal conversation.

[Our website](#) also has a set of [fact sheets](#) about individual carbon removal approaches and about the field as a whole.

Recent publications include:

Morrow, David R., Robert E. Kopp, and Michael Oppenheimer. "[Research Ethics and Geoengineering](#)," in Jason Blackstock and Sean Low (eds.), *Geoengineering Our Climate*, (Routledge, 2018).

Nicholson, Simon, and Michael Thompson. "[Strange Bedfellows: Climate Engineering Politics in the United States](#)," in Jason Blackstock and Sean Low (eds.), *Geoengineering Our Climate*, (Routledge, 2018).

Burns, Wil, and Simon Nicholson. "[Bioenergy and carbon capture with storage \(BECCS\): the prospects and challenges of an emerging climate policy response](#)." *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences* 7, no. 4 (2017): 527-534.

McGee, Jeffrey, Kerry Brent, and Wil Burns. "[Geoengineering the oceans: An emerging frontier in international climate change governance](#)." *Australian Journal of Maritime and Ocean Affairs* (2017).

Morrow, David. "[International Governance of Climate Engineering: A Survey of Reports on Climate Engineering, 2009-2015](#)." (2017).

Burns, William CG. "[The Paris Agreement and Climate Geoengineering Governance: The Need for a Human Right Component](#)." (2016).

Burns, William CG. "[Human Rights Dimensions of Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage: A Framework for Climate Justice in the Realm of Climate Geoengineering](#)." (2016).

Burns, Wil, and Simon Nicholson. "[Climate Engineering: Governing Emergency Responses on a New Earth](#)," in Simon Nicholson and Sikina Jinnah (eds.), *New Earth Politics*. MIT Press, 2016.

Craik, Alastair Neil, and William CG Burns. "[Climate Engineering Under the Paris Agreement a Legal and Policy Primer](#)." (2016).

Morrow, David R. and Toby Svoboda. "[Geoengineering and Non-Ideal Theory](#)." *Public Affairs Quarterly* 30:1 (2016).