



**Woodwell
Climate
Research
Center**



**Who should I be talking
with? / 02**

**Mitigating systemic risks
arising from tropical
deforestation / 03**

**Updates, Events, In the
news / 05**

Notes from the Field

October 2026



Who should I be talking with?

Here's a reality that I share with many in the climate community—the people I talk with most often about climate change tend to be people who already see it the way I do. They also tend to be people who I agree with on a variety of other issues, including those that have little or nothing to do with climate change. We validate one another, rehash the same arguments, and, I suspect, grow less persuasive to those outside the circle.

The fundamental science is settled: climate change is real, we're the cause, and it is serious. Science is the foundation upon which Woodwell stands, and we won't concede an inch on it. But how we communicate and who we communicate with is another issue. I'm increasingly convinced we can and must do a better job talking with people who come from different backgrounds and have different perspectives to accelerate progress on climate solutions.

So I've been seeking out people with a range of views, and I plan to increasingly do so. I've talked with the climate director at a major oil company, with the founders of a company studying whether we can cool the planet by putting particles in the stratosphere, and with religious conservatives and evangelicals who want climate action—all who are in many ways on the fringes of the climate community.

My mandate at Woodwell is climate change and climate solutions, and I won't turn away anyone who wants climate progress because we may disagree on other issues, particularly those that have little to do with climate. If you want to tackle climate change, and do it in a just and equitable way, I don't need you to share the rest of my politics. Climate change did not start out as a liberal issue, and it should not exclusively be one. Climate change impacts all life on our planet. When we let

climate action get bundled with a broader ideological package, we hand half the country a reason to tune out, and we make the problem harder to solve for everyone. I don't want Woodwell to reinforce that divide, even by accident. The cause is too important to be anyone's partisan property.

I know some of you will read this uneasily. Some will worry that I'm giving a platform to some of the very interests that spent decades muddying the water. I take that worry seriously. It's why I welcome the discussion about where to draw the lines. But I firmly believe that trying to understand someone is different than endorsing them, and listening is not surrender.

Preaching to the choir has its place. The choir needs tending, and even the convinced must be moved from belief to action. But the bigger task is to broaden the choir, to bring in voices that have never felt at home in it before. That is why I want more diverse voices in our monthly Woodwell Climate Conversations and other discussions we host—not to relitigate the physics, but to widen the range of vantage points on what we do about it. I'd rather Woodwell be the place where hard conversations happen than the place where comfortable ones repeat.

So I'll keep asking myself the question, and I'll ask it of you: who should I be talking with?

Onward.



Max

Dr. Max Holmes
President & CEO

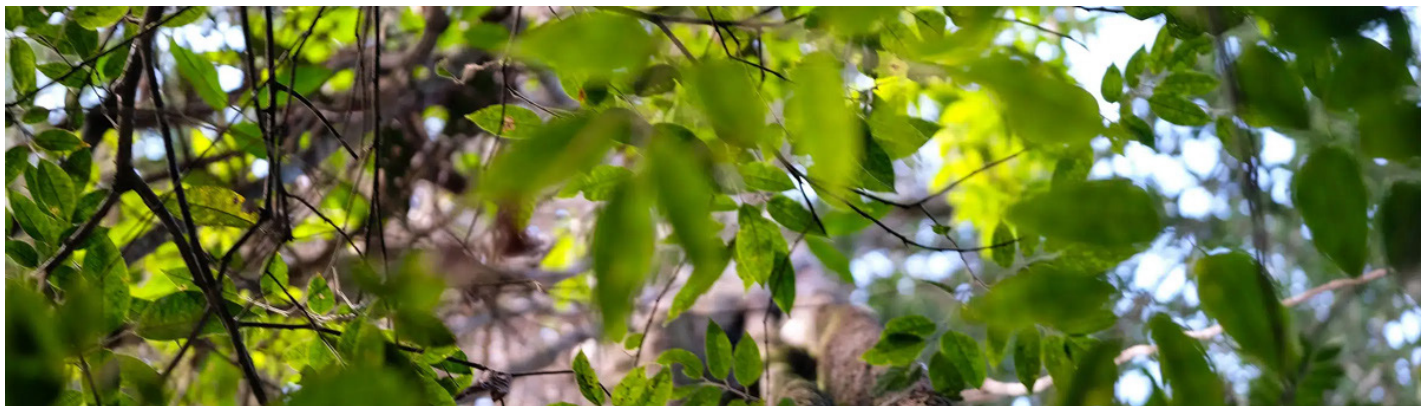
Tackling tropical deforestation

Senior Policy Advisor Frances Seymour and Senior Scientist Glenn Bush have been leading Woodwell's involvement with the Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF), which is dedicated to changing how forests are valued and preserved through the use of financial incentives. Countries from around the world, which may have little in common, are showing they can work together on this climate-focused goal.

A detailed policy brief was co-written by Seymour and released just before Climate Week NYC as a tool to help educate audiences about the importance of investing in forests.



"Bringing Finance to Forests" provides an overview of how financing forest conservation works.



Mitigating systemic risks arising from tropical deforestation

How the Tropical Forest Forever Facility can help

Frances Seymour Senior Policy Advisor
Bianca Rebelatto Research Analyst & Science Directorate, IPAM

Summary

Over the last year, the world has witnessed a series of extreme weather events suggesting that the natural systems that underpin our economies are beginning to fail. Protecting the climate-stabilizing effects of tropical forests must be an element of any strategy to build resilience to such events. Although not every region suffers the immediate and direct effects of tropical deforestation, all are affected by the global systemic risks that it poses to predictable weather patterns, food, water and energy security, public health and safety, and financial stability. Looking ahead, a "super El Niño" year promises to inflict further misery on those affected by the increases in heat waves, droughts, floods, and wildfires associated with such events and to exacerbate systemic risks. Closing the forest finance gap is key to mitigating those risks in the future, and the Tropical Forest

Forever Facility could fill a key niche among the most promising solutions for doing so.

The importance of tropical forests to global goals related to climate, biodiversity, and land degradation

Tropical forests play an outsized role in regulating the Earth's climate, harboring its biodiversity, and supporting the productivity of agricultural and other working lands. Halting and reversing tropical deforestation and land degradation is thus a challenge that cuts across the three Rio Conventions.

Climate. Tropical deforestation causes 11% of annual global greenhouse gas emissions, and conserving and restoring tropical forests offers one of the most cost-effective mitigation options (IPCC, 2019). Ending forest loss must be an important element of any strategy to address the significant systemic risks

attributable to greenhouse warming alone. Accordingly, the first Global Stocktake of the UNFCCC emphasized the importance of halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030 to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, 2023). In addition to their role in global climate mitigation, forests also affect local climate in ways that are important to adaptation by buffering the effects of greenhouse warming such as higher temperatures and extreme weather events (Seymour et al., 2022; Reek et al., 2026).

Biodiversity. The UNCBD's Global Biodiversity Framework similarly sets 2030 as a target "to bring the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance, including ecosystems of high ecological integrity, close to zero" (CBD, 2022). Tropical forests harbor the preponderance of the Earth's terrestrial biodiversity, including 62% of terrestrial vertebrate species (Pillay et al., 2021), while requiring less than 10% of global biodiversity finance (Deutz et al., 2020). A recent national security assessment by the U.K. government (2026) describes how the risks of biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse, including the Amazon and Congo Basin rainforests specifically, threaten global food security.

Desertification and land degradation. Tropical forests are also critical to achieving objectives articulated in the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, including "to combat desertification/land degradation..." and "to mitigate...the effects of drought..." (UNCCD, 2017). As elaborated below, tropical forests influence how moisture travels through the atmosphere and falls as precipitation, and how deforestation can disrupt rainfall patterns in ways that increase the risk of drought.

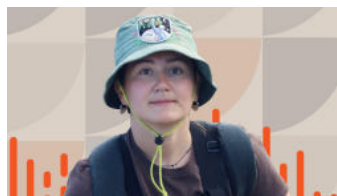
DIG DEEPER

Read the full policy brief:

[woodwellclimate.org/
mitigating-risks-from-deforestation](https://woodwellclimate.org/mitigating-risks-from-deforestation)



NOT A CLIMATE SCIENTIST



**Bridging people
and nature in a
climate career with
Francesca LoPresti**

Host Heather Goldstone talks with a recent college graduate who is trying to forge a climate career that feeds both her love of nature and her passion for working in community.

Listen to this and other episodes:

notaclimatescientist.org



Policy & Government Relations



Dr. Wayne Walker, VP of Science, and Laura Uttley, VP of Policy and Government Relations in a Washington, DC meeting. / photo by Eric Lee

Woodwell science leadership headed to Washington, D.C. to meet with congressional climate leaders. The meetings positioned our science and experts to influence legislation both now and in the next Congress.

The PGR team also submitted a public comment strongly urging the Forest Service to preserve the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, emphasizing that roadless areas protect mature and old-growth forests critical for carbon storage, ecosystem health, and wildfire resilience.

woodwellclimate.org/special-areas-roadless-area-conservation



In the news highlights

EVOME Journalism Fellow Barbara Moran produced a segment on WBUR about how thawing permafrost is threatening the quality of life for many Alaska residents.

Another EVOME Journalism Fellow, Gloria Dickie, published a feature story in *The Guardian* about the project and its research to learn more about whether an entire Arctic ecosystem can evolve to adapt to the climate crisis. The piece quoted Dr. Linda Deegan, Andie Norton, and Dr. Chris Neill.

In an article covering recent research on natural climate feedbacks, *Slate* quoted co-author Dr. Christina Schädel on the importance of accounting for carbon emissions from all sources.

The New York Times "Climate Forward" Thursday newsletter focused on climate impacts to global trade quoted Dr. Alex Naegele about low water levels in the Rhine River.

Past events



Dr. Manoela Machado was a speaker at an event hosted by Reciprocity House. / photo courtesy of If Not Us Then Who

Climate Week NYC

Woodwell returned to Climate Week NYC, focused on the energy, the impact, and the action that we drive together. Our experts participated in a wide variety of events and collaborations with partners.

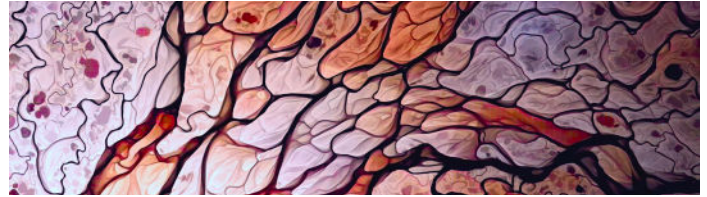


photo courtesy of Greg Fiske

Alaska Geosummit

A group from Permafrost Pathways participated in the Alaska Geosummit. The team presented on their various geo-related activities in Alaska at this conference centered around geospatial data and location-based technologies.

Upcoming events



Naturescape Gallery

Cape Cod Museum of
Natural History
Brewster, MA

September 9-October 31
Wednesdays-Sundays,
10am-3pm

Cartographies of Arctic Change exhibit

On **Saturday, October 17 at 1pm**, Fiske will host “Putting Science on the Map,” an exploration of commonly used tools and techniques for making beautiful maps, as well as the challenges, success stories, and failures faced in nearly two and a half decades of making maps for Woods Hole scientists.

woodwellclimate.org/cartographies-of-arctic-change



Woodwell Climate Conversations

WEDNESDAY
October 28 • 5-7 pm
in-person & livestream

Should we consider solar geoengineering?

As climate disruption increases, should we consider solar geoengineering approaches to rapidly cool the Earth? A conversation at the nexus of science, justice, and policy.

Join Woodwell Climate for a forward-looking conversation about the risks and potential of solar geoengineering—and exploring how better understanding these technologies today could help us make better-informed choices about our climate future.

woodwellclimate.org/solar-geoengineering

supported by Chris and Lisa Kaneb



cover: Drs. Ludmila Rattis and Brendan Rogers were speakers on a "Roadmap to Net Zero" panel discussion at Climate Week NYC. / photo by Pia Ostrognai Photography

Learn more about the events Woodwell Climate participated in: woodwellclimate.org/cwnyc-2026

Donations play an important role in securing the future of Woodwell Climate Research Center's work—and help safeguard the health of our planet for generations to come.

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CLIMATE SCIENCE FOR CHANGE.