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► To cite this version:

C. Hurd, Jean-Pierre Gattuso, P. Boyd. Air-sea carbon dioxide equilibrium: Will it be possible to use seaweeds for carbon removal offsets?. *Journal of Phycology*, 2024, 60 (1), 10.1111/jpy.13405 . hal-04281100

HAL Id: hal-04281100

<https://hal.science/hal-04281100v1>

Submitted on 12 Nov 2023

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**AIR-SEA CARBON DIOXIDE EQUILIBRIUM: WILL IT BE
POSSIBLE TO USE SEaweEDS FOR CARBON REMOVAL
OFFSETS?**

Journal:	<i>Journal of Phycology</i>
Manuscript ID	JPY-23-133-P
Manuscript Type:	Perspective
Date Submitted by the Author:	24-Jul-2023
Complete List of Authors:	Hurd, Catriona; University of Tasmania, Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies Gattuso, Jean-Pierre; Sorbonne Université, CNRS, Laboratoire d'Océanographie de Villefranche, 181 chemin du Lazaret, F-06230 Villefranche-sur-Mer, France Boyd, Philip; University of Tasmania, IMAS
Keywords:	carbon dioxide, climate change, Macroalgae
Alternate Keywords:	Carbon Dioxide Removal

1 AIR-SEA CARBON DIOXIDE EQUILIBRIUM: WILL IT BE POSSIBLE TO USE
2 SEAWEEDS FOR CARBON REMOVAL OFFSETS?

3

4 For *Journal of Phycology* as an invited Perspective

5

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16 **Keywords:** Carbon credits and offsets, carbon trading scheme, Forensic Carbon Accounting,
17 ocean macroalgal afforestation, seaweed aquaculture

18

19 **Running title:** Can seaweeds be used for carbon removal offsets?

20

21 **Acknowledgements:** This work was supported by an Australian Research Council (ARC)

22 Discovery Project DP200101467 to CLH and an ARC Laureate Fellowship FL160100131 to

23 PWB. JPG was supported by the EU Horizon programme (FACE-IT project, grant

24 agreement No 869154).

25

26 Abstract

27

28 To limit global warming below 2°C by 2100, we must drastically reduce greenhouse gas
29 emissions and additionally remove ~100–900 Gt CO₂ from the atmosphere (Carbon Dioxide
30 Removal, CDR) to compensate for unavoidable emissions. Seaweeds (marine macroalgae)
31 naturally grow in coastal regions worldwide where they are crucial for primary production
32 and carbon cycling. They are being considered as a biological method for CDR via
33 substantially expanding the current scale of seaweed aquaculture, and for use in carbon
34 trading schemes as offsets. To use seaweeds in carbon trading schemes requires verification
35 that seaweed photosynthesis that fixes CO₂ into organic carbon results in CDR, along with
36 the safe and secure storage of the carbon removed from the atmosphere for more than 100
37 years (sequestration). Although there is much ongoing research into the magnitude of
38 seaweed carbon storage pools (e.g. as living biomass, and particulate and dissolved organic
39 carbon in sediments and the deep ocean), these pools do not equate to CDR unless the
40 amount of CO₂ removed from the atmosphere as a result of seaweed primary production can
41 be quantified and verified. The draw-down of atmospheric CO₂ into seawater is via air-sea
42 CO₂ equilibrium which operates on time scales of weeks or years depending upon the
43 ecosystem considered. Here, we explain why quantifying air-sea CO₂ equilibrium and
44 linking this process to seaweed carbon storage pools is the critical step needed to verify CDR
45 by discrete seaweed beds and aquaculture systems prior to their use in carbon trading.

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51 Introduction

52

53 Since the industrial revolution, humans have released carbon, that was stored on geological
54 timescales as gas, oil and coal, into the atmosphere. The resulting increase in atmospheric
55 CO₂ from pre-industrial levels of ~280 ppm to current values of 417 ppm is causing ongoing
56 warming of the atmosphere and ocean, terrestrial and marine heatwaves, and altered weather
57 patterns: the cumulative effects of these rapid environmental changes are altering natural
58 systems and challenging human societies across the globe to adapt (Bindoff, 2019; Smale et
59 al., 2019; Smith et al., 2022).

60

61 In order to keep warming below 2°C, CO₂ emissions must be drastically reduced, but also
62 100–1000 Gt CO₂ must be removed from the atmosphere over the present century (IPCC,
63 2018; 1 Gt CO₂ = a billion tonnes of carbon dioxide). Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR) is
64 defined as anthropogenic activities removing carbon dioxide (CO₂) **from the atmosphere**
65 and durably storing it in geological, terrestrial, or ocean reservoirs, or in products (van
66 Diemen R., 2022). Carbon sequestration can be defined as the storage of carbon-containing
67 molecules for more than 100 years outside the atmosphere: sequestered carbon must be stored
68 in a safe, reliable and verifiable way (GESAMP 2019). Ideally, carbon sequestration would
69 permanently lock-up CO₂ so that it does not re-enter the atmosphere in the future (Smith et al.
70 2023). Various strategies are being proposed for CDR. Ocean-based CDR includes ocean
71 alkalinity enhancement (Renforth and Henderson 2017) and the expansion of coastal seaweed
72 beds including via aquaculture in order to increase the scale of seaweed primary production
73 (Ross et al. 2023).

74

75 Seaweeds are highly productive coastal primary producers of temperate rocky shores
76 worldwide where they form substantial biomass in natural beds, provide energy to higher
77 trophic levels and create a habitat for invertebrates and fish (Hurd et al. 2014, Pessarrodona et
78 al. 2022 a, b). They have been proposed as a biological method of CDR, and for eventual use
79 in carbon trading as carbon removal offsets (Coleman et al. 2022, Cooley et al. 2022, Ross et
80 al. 2023, S1): indeed some companies and NGOs are already selling on the voluntary carbon
81 market seaweed carbon from aquaculture as offsets (S2, S3, S4). Ongoing projects include
82 enhancing the scale of natural seaweed beds by restoring beds that have been negatively
83 affected by climate change and local anthropogenic activities, and expanding the scale of
84 seaweed aquaculture including in the open ocean (Duarte et al. 2017, Froehlich et al. 2019,
85 Filbee-Dexter et al. 2022). Numerous start-up companies and NGOs are trialing growing
86 seaweeds, particularly kelps (order Laminariales), in various aquaculture systems in the
87 coastal and open oceans (S1-S7). An underlying assumption in all these trials is that the areal
88 expansion of seaweed production will remove globally relevant amounts of atmospheric CO₂
89 and result in secure storage on time scales relevant to sequestration.

90

91 Demonstrating the long-term CDR and carbon sequestration by seaweeds is currently
92 confounded by the lack of adoption of a clear definition of the term “carbon sequestration”.
93 We use biogeochemical definitions of CDR and secure C-storage for more than 100 years
94 (see above): these definitions require that two processes are coupled in a quantifiable way i.e.
95 the removal of atmospheric carbon dioxide and the subsequent storage of the resulting
96 organic carbon on long time scales. However, in the literature, carbon sequestration is
97 variously considered as synonymous with net primary production (NPP), carbon fixation,
98 carbon standing stock/biomass, carbon sink, or break-down products of seaweed carbon that
99 are buried in sediments (e.g., Chung et al., 2011, Chung et al., 2017, Duarte et al., 2017,

100 Sondak et al., 2017, Filbee-Dexter and Wernberg 2020, Eager et al. 2023, UNEP 2023).

101 Although each of these processes is important to assess carbon stocks, storage pools, fluxes
102 and budgets in seaweed systems, and export to other systems, none are equivalent to CDR
103 nor carbon sequestration as defined above.

104

105 Forensic Carbon Accounting (FCA) is a framework to assess the contribution of seaweed to
106 CDR and carbon sequestration and was developed to assist scientists, NGOs and companies
107 interested in assessing the potential of seaweeds for carbon offsets and credits (see the
108 checklist in Table 2, Hurd et al. 2022). Ensuring that carbon offset/credit schemes are

109 legitimate is critically important to ensure the integrity of carbon credits so that they can be
110 used in carbon trading, i.e. the removal of atmospheric CO₂ by seaweeds and its secure
111 storage must be subject to a monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) process (Cadman

112 and Hales 2022). The FCA framework includes biological metrics such as photosynthesis,
113 standing stocks, export of seaweed production to other systems including nearshore
114 sediments and the deep ocean (Hurd et al., 2022). It also incorporates an Earth system
115 analysis because the carbon cycles of the atmosphere and oceans are linked on global scale.

116 There is much ongoing research to determine the contributions of seaweed carbon to various
117 storage pools, particularly in the context of 'Blue Carbon', including as living biomass,
118 particulate and dissolved organic carbon (POC, DOC), and sedimentary seaweed carbon (e.g.
119 Pedersen et al. 2020, 2021, Gao et al. 2022, Li et al 2022, Perkins et al 2022, Erliana et al.
120 2023). Here we build on Hurd et al. (2022) by detailing why it is critical to link these carbon
121 pools with air-sea CO₂ exchange in order to verify CDR by seaweeds.

122

123

124

125 Seaweed carbon storage pools

126

127 Seaweeds contribute to a range of oceanic carbon storage pools including living biomass, as
128 well as POC, DOC and dissolved CO₂ which are released into the water column (Fig. 1a). As
129 seaweeds are short-lived with rapid turnover-times, they do not store carbon as living
130 biomass on time-scales relevant to sequestration (Hurd et al. 2022; Fig. 1a). Seaweed beds
131 do not create soil, which is the largest pool of sequestered carbon on land. A proportion of
132 seaweed carbon is, however, exported (often laterally – termed out-welling) to other systems
133 including where it may be stored on various times-scales including in deep oceanic sediments
134 (Fig. 1 a; Filbee-Dexter et al. in revision; Ould and Caldwell 2022). As POC and DOC are
135 transported via ocean currents beyond continental shelves (200 m isobath, Filbee-Dexter et al.
136 in revision), a range of processes will regulate the fate of seaweed carbon including
137 remineralization to CO₂ by heterotrophic bacteria and photochemical oxidation (Fig. 1 a;
138 Filbee-Dexter et al. in revision).

139

140 POC ranges in size from tiny particles (100 µm and larger detritus) to large pieces of
141 detached seaweed blade, holdfasts, stipes or even entire detached seaweeds (Pedersen et al.
142 2020, 2021). It is an extremely important carbon-flux that supports higher trophic levels,
143 being consumed within the seaweed bed by mobile and sessile herbivorous invertebrates (e.g.
144 urchins, amphipods, isopods, snails, abalone, Fig. 1a). A proportion of POC is exported to
145 adjacent systems where it may also be consumed (Filbee-Dexter et al., 2020) or broken down
146 into various biochemical components some of which may reside in sediments on long time
147 scales (Pedersen et al., 2021). The fate of kelp biomass will depend various environmental
148 factors that affect the rate at which it decomposes and the specific biochemicals the biomass
149 is degraded to. Factors include temperature and whether or not the local environment is

150 aerobic or anaerobic (Pedersen et al., 2021). In field studies of the kelp *Laminaria*
151 *hyperborean*, break-down times were between 150-300 days, with aerobic conditions leading
152 to the complete degradation of the biomass into various substances including mannitol and
153 polyphenols (both constituents of DOC), whereas under anaerobic conditions around 20-30%
154 of kelp material did not breakdown and was stored in the sediment (Pedersen et al 2021). As
155 larger pieces of POC transit offshore, they do so with a range of invertebrates and bacteria
156 that will result in its decomposition on various timescales (Boyd et al., 2022).

157
158 Living seaweeds release substantial amounts of DOC which is defined as “any organic
159 carbon particles that pass through a filter pore size 0.22–0.7 μm (GF/F filters)” (Paine et al.,
160 2021; Sondergaard & Middelboe, 1995; Fig. 1). The release rate varies seasonally, with
161 species and location (Paine et al., 2021, 2023). DOC is a generic term for a wide range of
162 molecules of various sizes and labilities. Labile DOC may be consumed almost immediately
163 by bacteria in the water column. Recalcitrant and refractory DOC have much longer time
164 scales of degradation and are the most likely form of DOC in long-term carbon storage pools:
165 They are exported offshore to other systems including shelf seas and the deep ocean where
166 DOC from various sources is considered an important carbon store on sequestration-relevant
167 time scales (see Paine et al. 2021). Similar to POC, the composition of DOC will alter as it
168 moves offshore and downwards. For example, the photochemical breakdown of DOC will
169 likely increase in the optically brighter open oceans compared to turbid coastal waters (Wada
170 et al. 2015). The contribution of seaweed carbon to the DOC pool is unknown and we have
171 little understanding of its transit time and fate offshore (Paine et al., 2021).

172
173 In addition to the natural fluxes of seaweed carbon beyond the continental shelf, there is
174 considerable interest in enhancing these process by growing seaweeds on artificial structures

175 in the open ocean termed ‘ocean macroalgal afforestation’ and sinking resulting biomass to
176 the deep ocean (Fig. 1b, N’Yeurt et al. 2012, Ocean Visions and Monterey Bay Aquarium
177 Research Institute 2022; Ross et al. 2022, Arzeno-Saltero et al. 2023, S1, S7). As seaweeds
178 sink, a range of processes (as above) will affect their degradation and the amount of biomass
179 that reaches the deep ocean floor (Fig. 1b). Once below the permanent pycnocline (~ 500 m)
180 the seaweed carbon is out of contact with the atmosphere for more than 100 years. In some
181 respects, FCA for these aquaculture systems should be more straightforward as they are
182 mono-cultures (compared to highly diverse natural seaweed communities) with relatively few
183 natural herbivores; so, some biological processes will be easier to assess. Nevertheless, to
184 quantify the amount of atmospheric CO₂ that sunken seaweed biomass has removed requires
185 measurement of air-sea CO₂ equilibrium.

186

187 Air-sea CO₂ equilibration

188

189 The key concept in understanding the role of seaweeds in CDR is the air-sea CO₂ exchange
190 (Fig. 2). CO₂ enters (influx) and leaves (efflux) seawater as a gas, and it is the difference in
191 the partial pressure of CO₂ in air and water that drives the movement of CO₂. If the partial
192 pressure in air is greater than water, there will be a net influx of CO₂, and vice-versa if the
193 partial pressure in water is higher than in air. The chemistry of CO₂ in seawater is much
194 more complex than that of other gases such as O₂ and N₂. When it enters the ocean, CO₂ does
195 not simply dissolve, but it reacts with the water molecule which starts a series of chemical
196 reactions, characterizing the seawater carbonate system (Fig. 2). Bicarbonate (HCO₃⁻) is the
197 predominant form of dissolved inorganic carbon (DIC) in the ocean with a concentration of
198 ~1913 μmol kg⁻¹ compared to ~16 μmol kg⁻¹ for CO₂ (illustrative example, see legend of Fig.
199 3). The series of reactions in the seawater carbonate system are reversible and act to buffer

200 seawater and maintain seawater pH. However, the carbonate system reactions are very slow,
201 leading to an air-sea equilibration time about 20 times longer for CO₂ than oxygen. The
202 consequence is that the timescale for CO₂ to equilibrate with seawater is weeks in the coastal
203 ocean, months and years in the open ocean and several years in some systems such as the
204 Arctic (Jones et al. 2014, Bach et al. 2023). These timescales are modified by local physical
205 (e.g. bubble injection), chemical (e.g. slicks and surfactants) and biological (e.g.
206 photosynthesis and respiration) conditions which will vary in each seaweed system (see Fig.
207 3 in Hurd et al. 2022 and references therein).

208

209 When considering CDR by seaweeds, it is important to recognize that CO₂ is in constant flux
210 between the air and sea: whether or not CO₂ enters or exits seawater, and the rate of this
211 process, is essential in the assessment of CDR by seaweeds. However, this two-way
212 movement of CO₂ to and from seawater has been overlooked in some conceptual figures of
213 seaweed carbon sequestration potential (e.g. Coleman et al., 2022, Gao et al., 2022, Krause-
214 Jensen & Duarte, 2016, UNEP, 2023). For example, Fig. 2 in Krause-Jensen and Duarte
215 (2016), shows CO₂ entering the ocean as a result of natural seaweed biomass sinking to the
216 deep ocean, implying a direct link between sinking seaweeds, CDR and carbon sequestration.
217 However, these processes are not directly linked as we illustrate below.

218

219 Quantifying CDR by seaweeds

220

221 The vast majority of seaweeds remove inorganic carbon (CO₂ or HCO₃⁻) from seawater and
222 not the atmosphere (Fig. 3). This photosynthetic uptake of CO₂ results in a deficit of CO₂ in
223 the seawater within the seaweed bed and, in a second step, CO₂ enters seawater from the
224 atmosphere, a process referred to as CO₂ equilibration (Fig. 3 a-c). The timescale of

225 photosynthetic CO₂ uptake by seaweeds is seconds, whereas the timescale for equilibration is
226 weeks to years. Therefore, although seaweeds have removed CO₂ from seawater, it will take
227 weeks to years for full equilibration depending on the system (Bach et al. 2021, 2023).

228

229 The temporal mismatch between seaweed photosynthesis and CO₂ equilibrium means that
230 knowledge of photosynthetic rates and the size of the various seaweed carbon storage pools
231 does not equate to either CDR or carbon sequestration. To verify CDR, the critical step is to
232 evaluate the air-sea CO₂ equilibration (Bach et al. 2023). This can be calculated from the
233 residence time of the seawater in the seaweed bed, and the time needed for equilibration (e.g.
234 Bach et al 2021). The simplest seaweed system to measure would be a large, dense and
235 shallow seaweed bed or farm (on scales of km²) that have slow seawater flows and little
236 exchange or mixing of seawater within the bed with that surrounding it. In this scenario, the
237 seawater within the bed may be resident for sufficient time (weeks) for CO₂ equilibration to
238 occur, noting that most seaweeds have a requirement for at least moderate water flow for
239 healthy growth (Hurd, 2000). If the seaweed biomass (or part thereof) can then be securely
240 stored for 100 years or more, this could result in CDR and be quantified and verified.

241

242 If the seaweed bed is in wave-exposed site, which are typically beneficial for seaweed
243 healthy seaweed growth (Hurd 2000), then the seawater that bears the CO₂-deficit will move
244 rapidly to new locations with currents, along shore drift, tides and waves – such that the
245 equilibration needed for CDR will not occur in the surface waters above the seaweed bed
246 where the CO₂ was taken up by photosynthesis (Fig. 3e). If seawater moves along the
247 shoreline for several weeks, and continues to stay in an autotrophic system, then it may be
248 possible to track the water and quantify CDR (Fig. 3f1). If, however, the seawater moves
249 over heterotrophic systems such as an oyster or mussel bed, then the water with the CO₂

250 deficit will mix with high-CO₂ water and there will be less net CDR, and in some extreme
251 cases (heterotrophic water column end-member) there may be a net release of CO₂ (Fig. 3f2).
252 In some marine systems, particularly the open ocean, the seawater bearing the CO₂ deficit can
253 subduct such that it is not in contact with the atmosphere for a time sufficiently long for
254 equilibration and CDR (Fig. 3 f3; Orr and Sarmiento 1992, Bach et al. 2021).

255

256

257 Measuring CDR by seaweeds

258

259 The critical step in measuring and verifying CDR by seaweeds is to track the parcel of water
260 from which seaweeds removed the CO₂ to quantify CO₂ drawdown into the ocean, and verify
261 that the CO₂ was removed by the seaweed bed or farm for which carbon removal offsets are
262 being claimed. This is technically challenging but can be achieved by incorporating physical
263 oceanographers and modelers into programs to assess CDR by seaweeds (see Van Dam et al.
264 2021, Berger et al. 2023). A few studies have recognized the need to measure air-sea CO₂
265 equilibrium by following the seawater which bears the CO₂ deficit (Orr and Sarmiento 1992,
266 Watanabe et al. 2020, Bach et al. 2021, 2023, Berger et al. 2023). The required methods, and
267 their critical importance for measuring CDR, are exemplified for seagrass systems by Van
268 Dam et al. (2021), who found that four of six seagrass beds studied were net CO₂ sinks
269 whereas two beds were net sources of CO₂ for the atmosphere. Such methods will need to be
270 applied to each seaweed system being considered for carbon credits or offsets.

271

272 Some of the complexities highlighted here for seaweeds are less problematic when measuring
273 air-sea CO₂ equilibration by caused by phytoplankton photosynthesis. Phytoplankton are
274 ubiquitous throughout the euphotic zone of the global ocean and are mainly passive drifters

275 that move with the water mass (Basterretxea et al. 2020). For these two reasons,
276 equilibrium is more likely to occur following phytoplankton carbon fixation than in seaweed
277 systems where the seaweeds, in discrete beds or farms, are attached to a substratum and the
278 water moves away from where the CO₂ was photosynthetically fixed. Thus, there is a
279 pronounced decoupling between seaweed C fixation and the water body that carries the
280 'memory' of that fixation which then must equilibrate with atmospheric CO₂. The only
281 naturally-occurring free-drifting pelagic seaweeds are *Sargassum* spp of the Sargasso Sea;
282 they also comprise the recently-formed (> decade ago) Great Atlantic Sargassum Belt
283 (GASB) which comprises a patchy floating seaweed system. Within the free-drifting GASB,
284 the seawater from which the CO₂ was photosynthetically fixed has a residence time in the
285 upper ocean, before the waters subduct to depth, which is 3-18 fold too fast relative to the
286 equilibration time for atmospheric CO₂. Hence, equilibration will be inefficient with only 6-
287 33% of potential CDR being achieved (Bach et al. 2021).

288

289 Summary

290

291 Seaweeds are critically important to the health of coastal systems and provide substantial
292 services to humanity. Important work is ongoing to restore seaweed beds already damaged by
293 climate change (Wernberg et al. 2011, Smale et al. 2019). Seaweeds also have tremendous
294 aquaculture potential for human food and animal feeds, novel nutraceuticals and
295 pharmaceuticals (e.g. Wells et al. 2017, Bleakley and Hays 2017, Yu et al. 2018). For
296 example, they produce bioactive chemicals that are well-known to improve soil qualities and
297 agriculture that will have climate benefits in soil enhancing soil carbon (e.g. Roberts et al.
298 2015, Cole et al. 2017). The red seaweed genus *Asparagopsis* produces the chemical
299 bromoform that, when fed to sheep and cows, shows promising signs of reducing methane

300 emissions; there is evidence that chemical properties of brown seaweeds also play a similar
301 role (Choi et al. 2021, Alvarez-Hess et al. 2023, De Bhowmick and Hayes 2023). Seaweed
302 biomass may therefore be useful to help offset climate change in ways that have a
303 disproportionate influence for the amount of seaweed biomass used, and for which offsets are
304 more easily verifiable. Ongoing work to understand the role that seaweeds play in the
305 coastal and open ocean carbon cycle, including the size of various storage pools, is extremely
306 important to enable predictions of how oceanic carbon cycles will change in the future, as
307 temperature rises and levels of dissolved CO₂ increase causing ocean acidification
308 (Pessarrodona et al. 2018, Gao et al. 2022).

309

310 The essential step that needs to be incorporated into all studies aimed to at quantifying and
311 verifying CDR and carbon sequestration by seaweeds is air-sea CO₂ equilibrium. Figure 4
312 highlights the fates of both the parcel of water bearing the CO₂ deficit and seaweed biomass.
313 There is no doubt that seaweeds form long term carbon storage pools in ocean sediments on
314 time scales of 100 years or more, although their contribution on a global scale is extremely
315 small (< 1%, 55 Tg C yr⁻¹) compared to 99 % from oceanic phytoplankton via the biological
316 pump (5-15 Pg C yr⁻¹; Boyd et al. 2019; Pessarrodona et al. 2023, Filbee-Dexter et al. in
317 review). However, for any seaweed system (natural bed, seaweed farm) under consideration
318 for carbon credits and/or offsets, two steps are required to monitor, report and verify CDR
319 (Fig. 4): 1. The parcel of seawater that bears the CO₂ deficit resulting from seaweed
320 photosynthesis must be tracked over long time scales (weeks to months) to quantify the
321 amount of atmospheric CO₂ that enters seawater; at the very least, an assessment of the risk
322 involved in not knowing the full equilibration time must be undertaken (Bach et al. 2023),
323 and 2. The amount of the organic carbon from the same seaweed system that enters long term
324 storage (> 100 years; as POC, DOC) must be quantified. Our view is that the difficulty of

325 linking these two steps for individual seaweed beds and farms currently precludes the use of
326 seaweeds in carbon trading schemes.

327

328

329 Figure legends

330

331 Figure 1. Seaweed carbon storage pools. (a). Most seaweeds store carbon as living biomass
332 for < 10 years. (1) Carbon from living and decaying seaweeds can be recycled within the
333 seaweed bed via herbivory, autotrophic and heterotrophic respiration, and release of
334 particulate and dissolved organic carbon (DOC, POC). (2) Living and decaying seaweeds
335 also contribute POC and DOC to adjacent systems via lateral transport. This transport may
336 be within coastal systems or beyond the continental shelf to the deep ocean. As POC and
337 DOC are transported offshore, they are broken down into carbon-containing molecules via
338 various processes including photochemical oxidation (zig-zag arrow) and heterotrophic
339 respiration. (b). Schematic of an offshore seaweed aquaculture system in which (1)
340 seaweeds are grown in the photic zone, and (2) the resultant biomass is sunk below the
341 permanent pycnocline (500 m) to the deep ocean. (3) Seaweeds that have been sunk below
342 the permanent pycnocline are out of contact with the atmosphere, and seaweed carbon and
343 breakdown products will not return to the atmosphere for more than 100 years.

344

345 Figure 2. In its gaseous form, carbon dioxide (CO_2) is exchanged between seawater and the
346 atmosphere. The rate and magnitude CO_2 flux into and out of the surface ocean is driven by
347 the partial pressure of CO_2 , and other processes (see text). CO_2 dissolves slowly in seawater
348 compared to other gases such as O_2 , and once dissolved it reacts with water (H_2O) and is
349 subject to a series of chemical reactions. The combined effects of the relative insolubility of

350 CO₂ and the slow reactions times of the seawater carbonate system lead to the timeframe of
351 equilibration between atmosphere and air of weeks (coastal ocean) to months and year (open
352 ocean). Illustrative values of the concentration of CO₂ and HCO₃⁻ were calculated using the
353 following set of variables: *p*CO₂ (417 μatm), total alkalinity (2290 μmol kg⁻¹), salinity of 35
354 and a temperature of 15°C.

355

356 Figure 3. Air-sea CO₂ equilibrium and the fate of the water parcel which bears the CO₂-
357 deficit that resulted from seaweed net photosynthesis. Air-sea CO₂ exchange is indicated on
358 the upper left hand side of each figure, but this process occurs across all water bodies
359 illustrated. (a) Carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere enters or leaves seawater (CO_{2(g)}) as
360 a gas. It dissolves into seawater (CO_{2(aq)}) which is a component of the seawater carbonate
361 system (see Fig. 2). (b) Seaweeds remove CO₂ and bicarbonate (HCO₃⁻) from seawater on
362 time-scales of seconds, which (c) results in a CO₂ deficit in the seawater within the seaweed
363 bed (grey shading). (d) The seawater bearing the CO₂ deficit moves away from the seaweed
364 bed. For simplicity, it moves to the right of the picture (indicated by the arrow) and is
365 replenished with new seawater (dashed line) from which seaweeds to remove dissolved
366 inorganic carbon. (e). The seawater bearing the CO₂ deficit has moved completely away
367 from the seaweed bed from where the CO₂ was photosynthetically fixed. We now consider
368 three fates for the seawater bearing the CO₂ deficit: In (f1), the seawater has moved in
369 another autotrophic (vegetated) system. In (f2), it has moved into a heterotrophic (e.g. an
370 oyster bed) system. In both cases (f1 and f2), the seawater bearing the CO₂ deficit mixes
371 with water in the new systems which will affect the direction and magnitude of air-sea
372 equilibrium. In (f3), the seawater bearing the CO₂ deficit has moved offshore, and subducted
373 below another water parcel such that it is no longer in contact with the atmosphere.

374 Subduction is most common in the open ocean where CO₂ equilibration times are months to
375 year, and can result in incomplete CO₂ equilibration (see text).

376

377 Figure 4. Schematic linking the two processes that are critical to assess whether discrete
378 seaweed beds (or seaweed farms) can be used in carbon trading schemes as offsets or credits.
379 Air-sea CO₂ equilibrium is illustrated on the top left hand side but this process occurs in all
380 water bodies illustrated. Black text and lines depict the various ways in which the seawater
381 that bears the CO₂-deficit may move away from the seaweed bed in which the CO₂ was
382 photosynthetically fixed. To assess CO₂ equilibrium, the water parcel must be followed for
383 weeks in natural coastal systems (illustrated here), whereas in the open ocean (ocean
384 macroalgal afforestation) the time scale of tracking the water is months to years. In the
385 coastal system illustrated, the seawater may move along shore staying within a large kelp bed
386 (i.e. an autotrophic system, see Fig. 3 f1) for several weeks. It may also move along shore
387 but over a heterotrophic system (see Fig. 3 f2), or offshore where the seawater will be mixed
388 with other water bodies with different partial pressures of CO_{2(g)}. The seawater may also
389 subduct below a less-dense water mass, resulting in incomplete equilibration (see Fig. 3 f3).
390 The white arrows and text illustrate the processes involved in assessing carbon storage pools
391 for seaweed carbon that has moved across the continental shelf. Some proportions of DOC
392 and POC from seaweeds will break down and re-enter the atmosphere as CO₂. An estimated
393 16% of seaweed POC will transit the continental shelf (200 m isobath) and be stored in deep
394 ocean sediments (Filbee-Dexter et al. in revision). A proportion of recalcitrant DOC that is
395 resistant to degradation may be stored in the deep ocean but this has not been quantified to
396 date. If seaweeds are grown offshore at large spatial scales in ocean macroalgal afforestation
397 (Fig. 1 and S1, S7) and the resulting biomass sunk below the permanent pycnocline, then the

398 biomass will reside on the ocean floor, out of contact with the atmosphere for more than 100
399 years.

400

401

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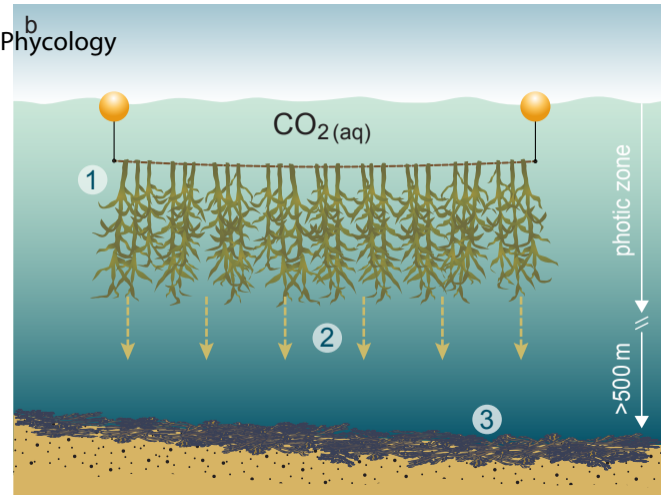
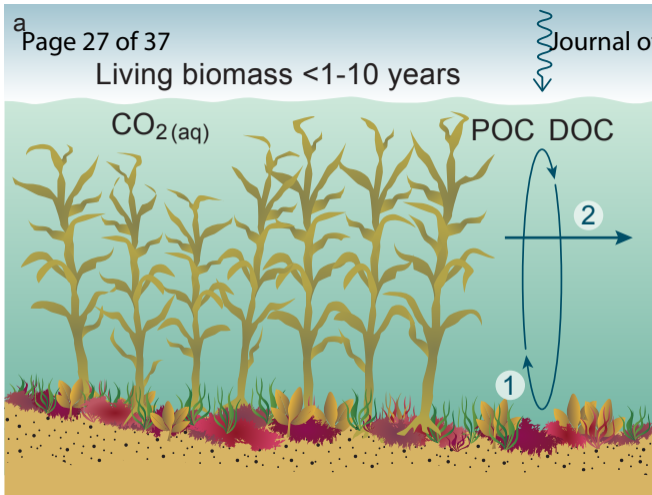
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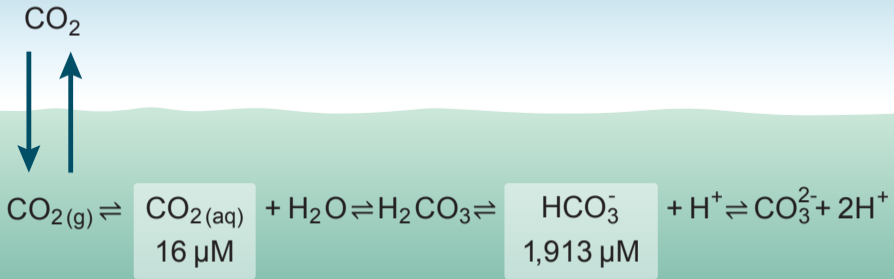
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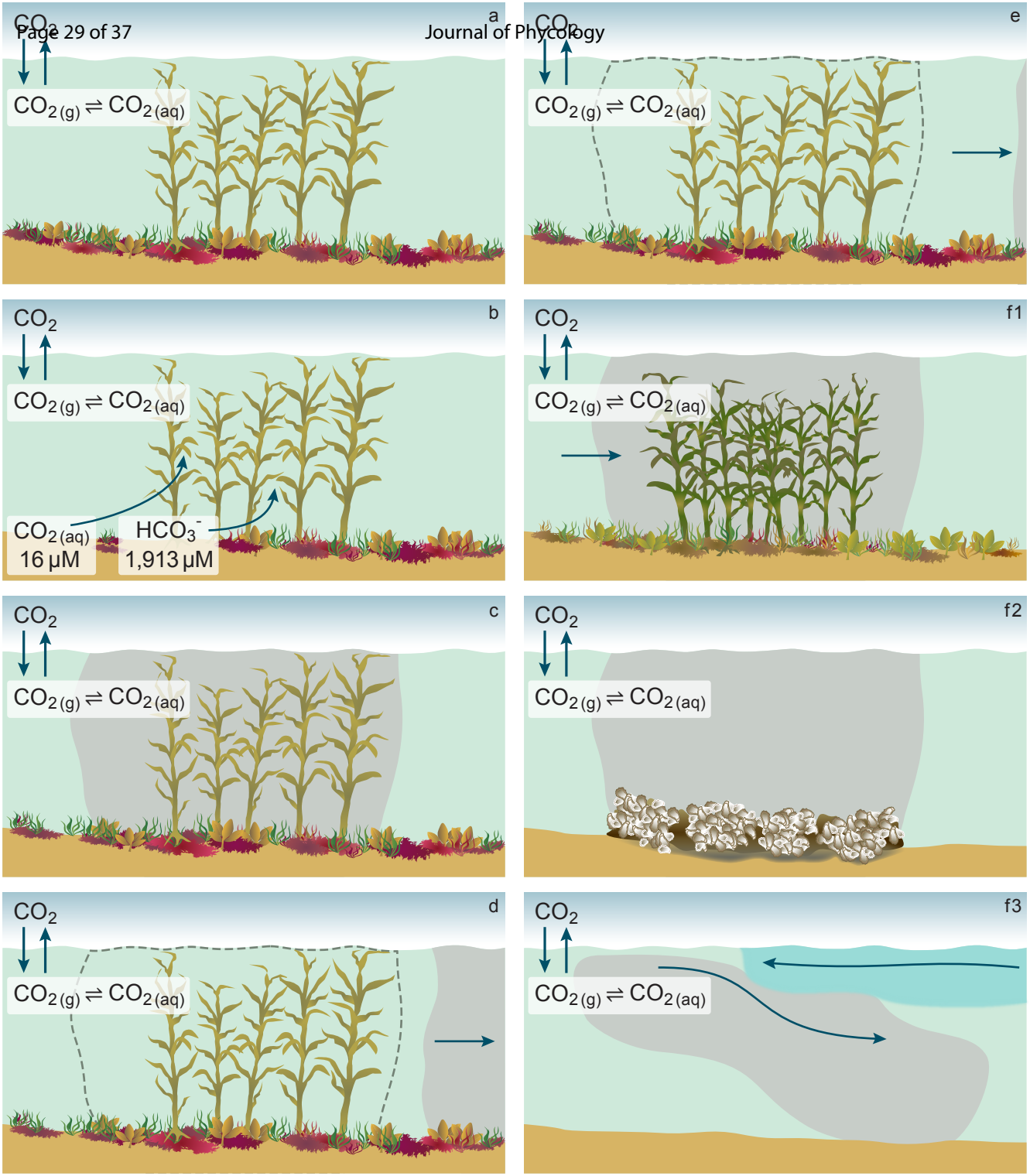
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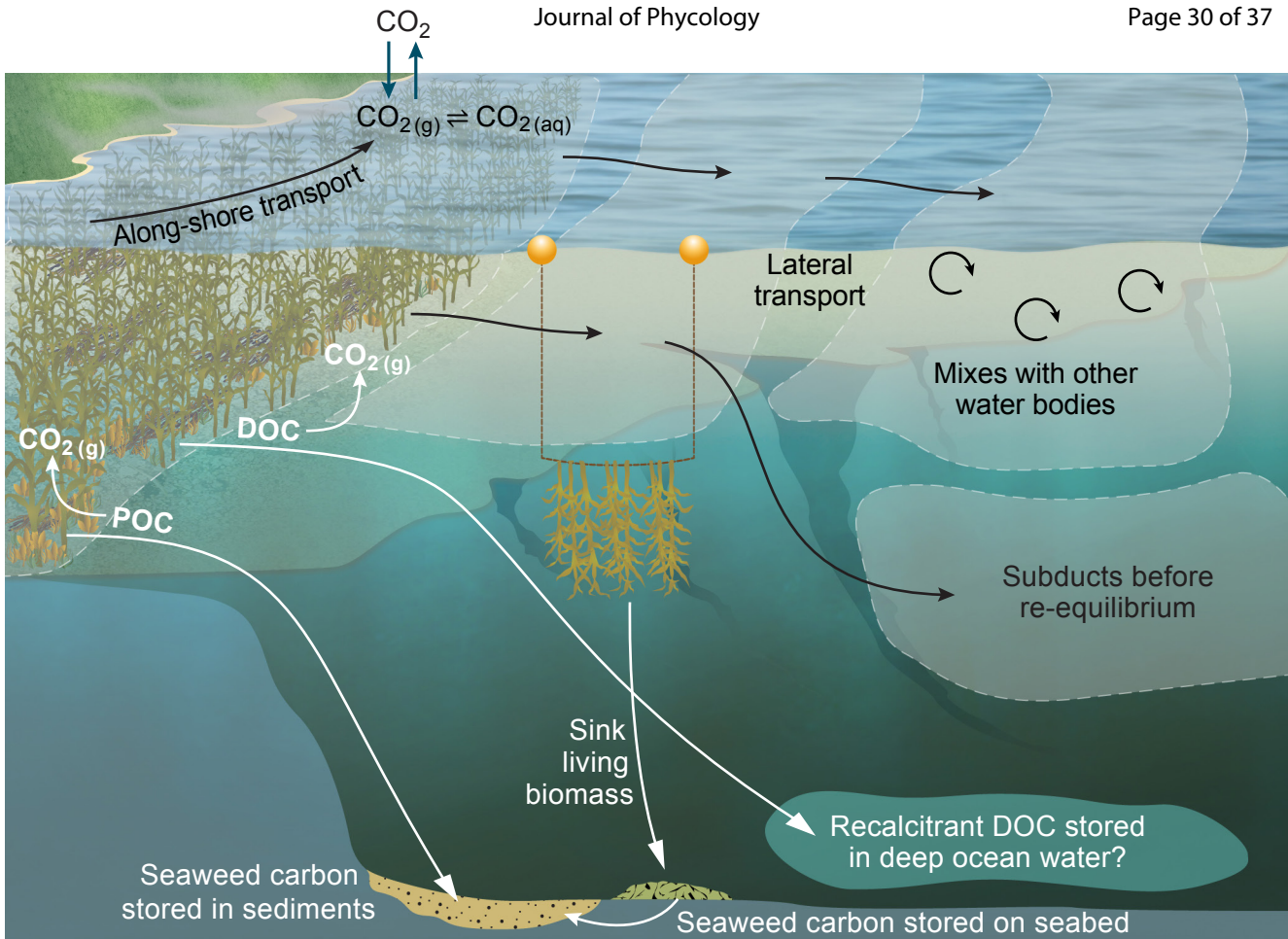
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S1. Running Tide. <https://www.runningtide.com/carbonremoval>. Seeks to grow seaweeds on buoys that are subsequently released to sink the biomass to the deep ocean, for carbon sequestration and CDR, and for use in carbon markets. Web site accessed 15 June 2023.

RUNNING TIDE

Carbon Removal Ocean Health Restoration Technology Science Team Blog

Running Tide moves carbon from the fast to the slow carbon cycle to restore ocean health.

→ Read the Protocol

Immediate

Carbon buoys move fast to the slow carbon cycle through ocean alkalinity restoration and photosynthesis before sinking to the deep ocean in a matter of months.

Scalable

The ocean is $\frac{2}{3}$ of Earth's surface. Our carbon buoys are deployed in locations far from shore where it doesn't compete for land or coastal space. With the potential of moving gigatons of carbon per year.

Carbon markets are in the midst of a crisis of trust, paralyzing progress around the urgent climate action we so desperately need. This reinforces the importance of building social license and confidence in new carbon removal solutions, such as those conducted in the ocean, against the backdrop of an emerging — but not yet mature — industry.

In addition to this lack of trust, there is an absence of established governance structures and effective regulatory frameworks that provide guardrails for those working in this space. As these standards are advocated for and developed at an industry level, those conducting this work within natural systems must be crystal clear about the standards we hold ourselves to, and that inform our ethical decision-making – from initial research, to eventual deployments and ongoing monitoring. Smaller scale, low-risk research and carbon removal activities following well-documented protocols can be used to efficiently develop, test, refine, and operationalize effective governance structures that are designed for real-world application, ensuring the creation of practical and actionable standards — without delaying critical climate action.

S2. Green Ocean Seaweed Farming. <https://www.greenoceanfarming.com/ocean-carbon-bonds.php> Selling Green Ocean Carbon Bonds, stating that £300 (Sterling) spent on Green Ocean Carbon Bonds will offset a household carbon footprint for one year. Web site accessed 15 June 2023.

Green Ocean Carbon Bonds

[Home](#) [About Us](#) [Carbon Sequestering](#) [Our Vision](#) [Green Hydrogen](#) [Health Benefits](#) [Laboratory Of Excellence](#) [Media](#) [Donate And Help](#) [Make A Donation](#) [Contact Us](#)



Ocean Carbon Offset Bonds

Please click on the 'buy now' button below, £300 will cover one household for a year.

You will receive a Ocean Carbon Certificate with each purchase, making a great present.



[View Cart](#)

Ocean Carbon Bonds




Offset your household carbon foot print with an Ocean Carbon Bond. Helping you help the Oceans and the Planet.

£ 300

[Add to Cart](#)

S3. Carbon Kapture. <https://carbonkapture.com/>. Public can sponsor a seaweed 'rope' for a monthly donation of £2, £5 or £10. Corporate rates available for businesses. States that each metre of rope will capture 1.8 kg CO₂. Purchaser receives certification stating how much carbon they have captured. Web site accessed 15 June 2023.




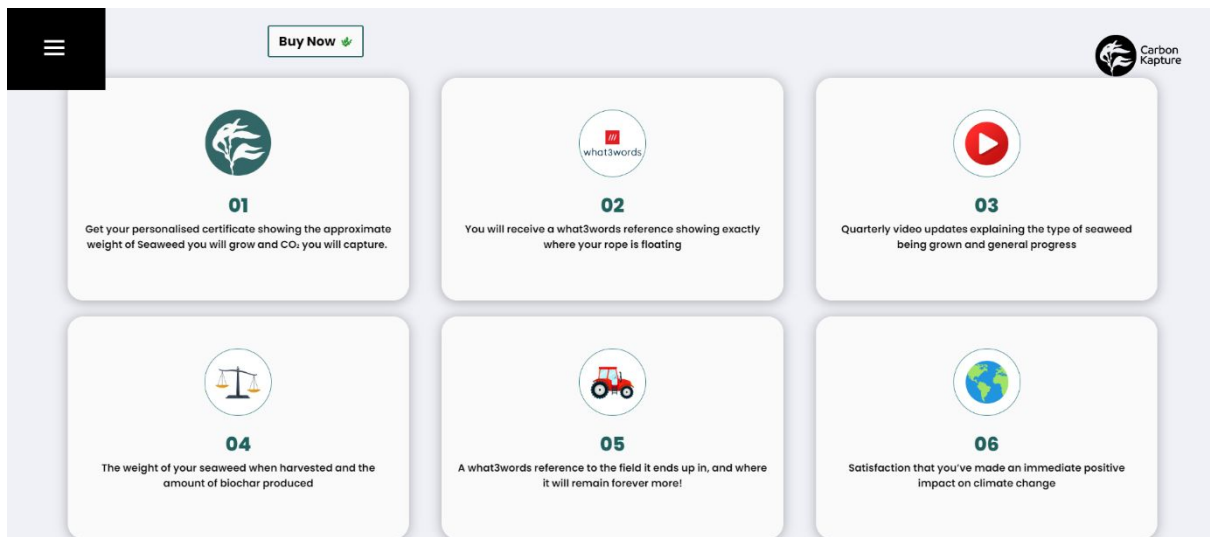
The Power Of One


Small personal actions can add up to a surprisingly significant impact. Climate-conscious individuals around the world are growing seaweed with Carbon Kapture to help create real-time community impact.

Sponsor a rope today for yourself, or as a wonderful gift for someone.

Each metre of rope will capture approx 1.8kg of CO₂

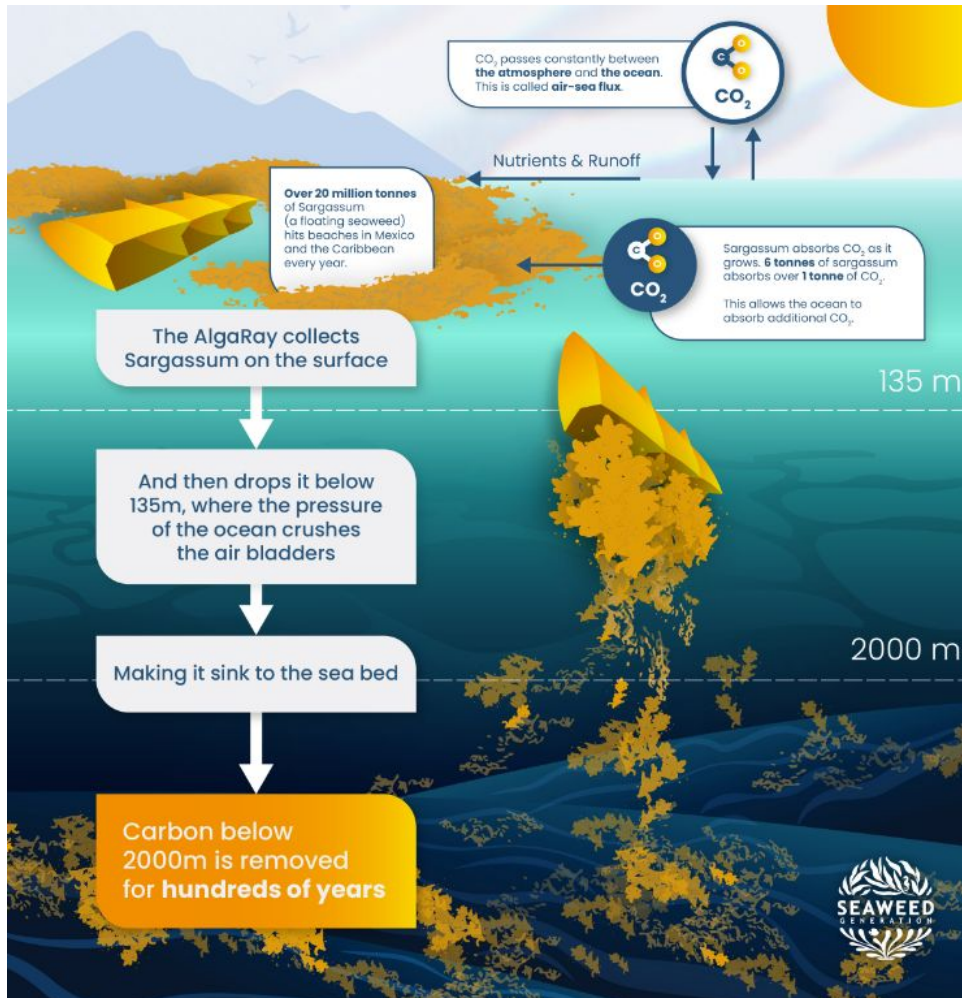
Buy Now 



Buy Now 

- 01**
Get your personalised certificate showing the approximate weight of Seaweed you will grow and CO₂ you will capture.
- 02**
You will receive a what3words reference showing exactly where your rope is floating
- 03**
Quarterly video updates explaining the type of seaweed being grown and general progress
- 04**
The weight of your seaweed when harvested and the amount of biochar produced
- 05**
A what3words reference to the field it ends up in, and where it will remain forever more!
- 06**
Satisfaction that you've made an immediate positive impact on climate change

S4. Seaweed Generation. <https://www.seaweedgeneration.com/>. The aim goal is to collect and sink existing pelagic *Sargassum* to the deep ocean (> 2,000 m) for carbon sequestration, and to grow *Sargassum* 'sustainably and cheaply'. Donations of \$40-\$400 are welcomed to remove 100-1,000 kg seaweed to the deep ocean, which are claimed to offset personal carbon use. Web site accessed 16 June 2023.



Be part of the solution

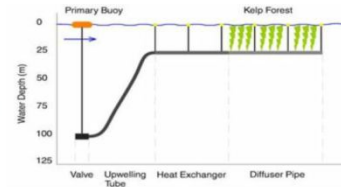
All of us are contributing to climate change. The good news is, you can join the fight right now by contributing to carbon dioxide removal, and helping us to develop our technology. How much can you help?

Silver	Gold	Diamond
100 kg	250 kg	1,000 kg
Price \$40	Price \$100	Price \$400
This would offset about 18 days of meals for the average person (including growth, production, and transportation costs).	This would offset about 650 miles of driving, for the average car that gets 24 miles per gallon.	Flying 6,000 miles, which is about two trips between Boston and London, uses 1,000 kg (or 1 tonne) of CO ₂ per passenger.
Contribute	Contribute	Contribute

Did you know? The average person emits 12,000 to 18,000 kg of carbon dioxide per year!

S5. Climate Foundation. <https://www.climatefoundation.org/>. Growing seaweeds at scale using marine permaculture and artificial upwelling for carbon sequestration, and a range of other seaweed-based products. ‘Thousands to millions’ of modular platforms (each of a hectare scale) will be installed across the tropical and sub-tropical waters. Web site accessed 15 June 2023.

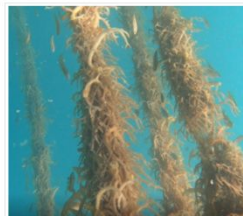
Floating, open-ocean kelp ecosystems placed in the oceanic deserts around the world could sequester atmospheric carbon and attract and grow fish, filtering out their waste and recycling nutrients. The kelp could be harvested to be used as biofuel, fertilizer, livestock feed, superfood and countless biomass applications and high-value extract. After high-value extraction at sea in the harvester bio-refinery, the kelp could be sunk to deep anoxic environments, locking 90% of the sequestered carbon away for millennia.



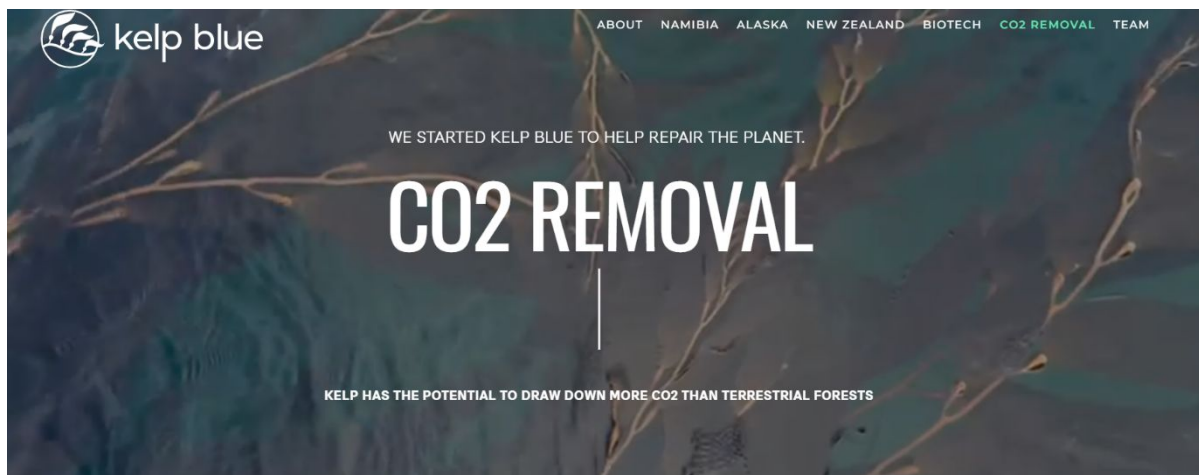
The large-scale regeneration and open-ocean cultivation of kelp forests will provide food, fuel and fertilizer for the 9 billion humans that are likely to inhabit the planet by 2040, while drawing down carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and leaving space on land for all those other uses.


To see what we are doing about it, click here <http://www.climatefoundation.org/marine-permaculture.html>

MP platforms are designed to be modular and will generate income at hectare scale. Such designs enable a distributed scaling model whereby hectare-scale platforms can be built thousands to millions of times across tropical and subtropical waters. Importantly, Marine Permaculture platforms can pay for themselves through seaweed production while drawing down carbon from the mixed layer to the middle and deep ocean, providing scaling opportunities independent of carbon pricing



S6. Kelp Blue. <https://kelp.blue/co2-removal/> Seeks to 're-wild' the oceans by growing *Macrocystis pyrifera* at scale for carbon dioxide removal and carbon sequestration. The harvested biomass will be used in biotechnological solutions to improving soil health <https://biotech.kelp.blue/>. Web site accessed 15 June and 21 July 2023.



 [ABOUT](#) [NAMIBIA](#) [ALASKA](#) [NEW ZEALAND](#) [BIOTECH](#) [CO2 REMOVAL](#) [TEAM](#)

At Kelp Blue, we're optimists and know action is possible. By planting large scale Giant Kelp Forests, we can both restore the natural ocean wilderness, while capturing excess CO₂ from the atmosphere.

HOW DOES KELP STORE AND PERMANENTLY SEQUESTER CO₂?

Giant Kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) is one of the fastest growing organisms on the planet and with optimal conditions can grow up to 60 cm (2 ft) in a day and reach lengths of up to 45 meters (150ft). Kelp is a type of brown seaweed and like land-based plants, uses the process of photosynthesis to grow. In this process, kelp absorbs sunlight, CO₂, and nutrients to store in its tissues like its blades, stipes, and fronds. The amount of carbon stored in the kelp's biomass is expressed as Net Primary Productivity (NPP).

As Kelp grows, it continuously releases organic material, some of which is minuscule and dissolves in water, called Dissolved Organic Carbon (DOC), and some larger material not able to dissolve in water.

DOC released by the kelp is immediately consumed by microbes or is transported out to sea where it sinks to the bottom of the ocean floor. Because the bottom of the ocean is unlikely to be disturbed and has very little human contact, the risk of the carbon being released is effectively zero, it can therefore be considered "permanently sequestered".

Any part of the kelp that breaks off and in size is larger than a pinhead is called Particulate Organic Carbon (POC). This could be the fronds that the kelp continuously sheds.

These fronds have gas bladders called pneumatocysts and gives them the ability to drift- sometimes thousands of kilometers. Eventually the kelp's gas-filled bladders burst, and the kelp detritus sinks to deeper waters or gets buried in ocean sediments. [One study](#) concluded that natural seaweed ecosystems already sequester approximately 173 million metric ton of carbon annually. This study also estimates that 43% of the kelp forests' carbon will be exported from the ecosystem in these two forms, DOC and POC and that approximately 9-11% of the Net Primary Productivity of kelp forests will be stored permanently in the ocean's deeper layers and sediments.

S7. Ocean Visions. <https://oceanvisions.org/our-programs/macroalgaeresearchframework/>. A NGO that “catalyzes innovation at the intersection of the ocean and climate crises”. One mitigation strategy they are investigating is growing seaweeds at massive scale in the open ocean and sinking them for carbon dioxide removal (CDR). Web site accessed 14 July 2023.

