

# GEOENGINEERING IN 2019: A RECAP

January 9, 2020

In the last year, geoengineering proponents have been normalizing this technofix at an alarmingly rapid pace. An emboldened geo-clique has attempted to rebrand geoengineering as “climate restoration” or “climate repair” as part of a larger push.

In February, we highlighted voices from Indigenous communities critical of geoengineering experiments in the Arctic.

In March, an opportunity to build on the CBD moratorium and create a framework for assessing geoengineering technologies was put forward by Switzerland and 11 other countries, but it was quashed by high-emitting countries.

A film produced by Leonardo DiCaprio – who in the past was a voice for climate justice – promoted several geoengineering technologies as solutions to the climate crisis. A similar change in tone occurred at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, which proposed a bizarre Antarctic ice scheme. More recently, the Institute’s director appeared to jump on the “climate restoration” rebranding of geoengineering technologies.

The International Standards Organization (ISO) advanced, in secret, a new proposed standard on radiative forcing that threatens to create a new market for climate credits that could undermine existing agreements. The proposed standard was leaked in August, leading to some pushback, but the ISO – a corporate-friendly environment largely closed to civil society – has continued work on the standard.

Also during the summer (the hottest on record), SCoPEX launched an advisory board aimed at legitimizing its defiance of the moratorium against open-air testing. The HOME campaign responded with an Open Letter calling on the committee members to step down and stop legitimizing “a project that furthers the interests of climate disrupting forces.”

The geoengineering push was highly visible at COP 25 of the UNFCCC in Madrid, where the “climate restoration” frame was used to promote unproven technofixes, and asking questions about carbon dioxide removal has increasingly become a means for the promotion of questionable technologies. Geoengineering technologies have actually been considered in recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports as one of the pathways out of the climate chaos, and those discussions appear likely to continue.

Through it all, we tracked smaller developments of a variety of geoengineering projects. carbon capture and venture capital in May, direct air capture in July, weather modification in August, upwelling in October, and calls for transparency in November.

## What will 2020 bring?

There is more to be said, but here are a few things we’re tracking:

- Inclusion of geoengineering in the 6th assessment report of the IPCC
- The risk of certain countries sneaking geoengineering into the Post 2020 biodiversity agenda through discussions of “nature based solutions”
- SCoPEX has faced delays upon delays, but will they finally attempt to test their solar geoengineering tech in 2020?
- The Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies will be holding a major conference in October to advance research and policy on geoengineering, which they are attempting to rebrand as “climate engineering”.

## Raising the stakes at COP 25 in Madrid

Geoengineering was promoted heavily by the usual suspects, and some new ones, at COP 25. One surprise was to see ocean fertilization – among the most thoroughly discredited forms of geoengineering among scientists – being promoted by the “climate restoration” proponents, with the participation of old geo-pirates, such as rogue geoengineer Russ George, who was involved in the largest illegal ocean fertilization experiment to date off the shores of Haida Gwaii, the traditional territory of the Haida nation in Canada. Just days before at COP 25, Terran, a civil society organization from Chile, had exposed an attempt by Oceaneos, a company derived from the Haida Gwaii initiative, to sell Ocean Fertilization as “Ocean Seeding.” The mobilization against geoengineering and other false solutions was also much higher. A packed side event critical of geoengineering was organized by several Hands Off Mother Earth signatories, including Via Campesina, Indigenous Environmental Network, ETC Group, HOME, Climate Justice Alliance, and Grassroots Global Justice Alliance. Other events critical of geoengineering were organized with Terran (Chile) and Ecologistas en Acción (Spain) in the public area of the COP 25 and in the alternative Social Summit for Climate in Madrid. In total, six events on geoengineering were held parallel to the COP 25 by members of the HOME

Campaign.

**Also on GeoengineeringMonitor.org**

The coordinator of our Hands Off Mother Earth campaign, Niki Miranda-Martinez, was featured in the *Manila Times* speaking against regional geonengineering schemes like ocean fertilization and artificial upwelling.

A **blog post** by Gabriel Levy thoroughly examines the arguments put forward by Holly Jean Buck for a socialist-flavoured geoengineering.

In two new reports, our researcher Anja Chalmin takes a close look at artificial upwelling and proposals for polar geoengineering proposals.

And our **November geoengineering updates** look closely at new research funding for geoengineering projects, a new carbon capture ocean platform, and recent calls for transparency.