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Navigating Ethical Challenges in Climate Intervention Research

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Aggressive carbon emissions reduction must remain the primary strategy for addressing climate change. However, as highlighted in the latest IPCC report, pathways to limit warming to 1.5°C or even 2°C depend on some level of carbon removal. The urgency to address climate change has spurred interest in technology-based interventions, often called climate engineering, which pose various ethical questions regarding their efficacy and risks.

Building on a history of advocating for strong scientific ethics, the American Geophysical Union published an Ethical Framework for Climate Intervention Research in October 2024. Developed with input from scientists, ethicists, community voices, youth advocates, and more, this framework guides researchers, institutions, governments, NGOs, funders, and the private sector in equitable and responsible dialogue around climate intervention options. It provides comprehensive guidance for ensuring responsible research practices, promoting holistic climate justice, fostering inclusive public participation, maintaining transparency, and supporting informed governance.

This presentation will delve into five key ethical principles for researchers investigating climate intervention methods and discuss how the scientific community can advocate for ethical standards in climate intervention research, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable and just approach to addressing climate change.