

Changing climate may mean changing science

A study by British and Canadian researchers suggests restoration methods of the past cannot necessarily be applied to the climate of the future.

The scientists -- James Harris of Cranfield University, along with Richard Hobbs and Eric Higgs of the University of Victoria -- say ecosystems behave in unpredictable ways, therefore restoration ecologists are often faced with unforeseen challenges.

The researchers see the largest potential challenge is restoring environments undergoing the most rapid rate of change in the Earth's history. That global warming is likely to have important regional consequences for biota and ecosystems.

Ecological restoration, including reforestation and rehabilitation of degraded land, may be a common response to the effects of climate change, but the researchers say the implications of that changing environment must be considered.

They warn using past ecosystem conditions as targets and references might be ineffective under new conditions. In addition, they say there may be less support in the future for longer-term, traditional restoration projects.

The authors suggest "more consideration and debate needs to be directed at the implications of climate change for restoration practice."

The study appears in the June issue of the journal *Restoration Ecology*.

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