How Will the CDR Industry Measure Results?

By Mark Fogarty

The monitoring, verification, and reporting of carbon removal is an airplane that is still being built as it taxies down the runway, an urgent job that doesn't have the luxury of time to linger over.

That's the impression I got while monitoring the recent Air Miners online workshop on MVR standards, where a panel of industry participants gave thoughtful discussions on what a good MVR system could look like, who should design MVR protocols, and how MVR quality will need to continue to improve.

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It was the first of four workshops Air Miners have held on MVR, breaking the topic down into general, mineralization, soil carbon, and enhanced rock weathering categories.

In fact, said Peter Minor, director of science and innovation at Carbon 180, "We may never see a grand unifying theory of MVR that spans across CDR (carbon dioxide removal)," but four core principles can be used "to describe what high-quality MVR looks like."

The first is direct accounting of the removal of carbon from the atmosphere, he said.

"How do we actually know that capture is happening? How directly can we measure those outcomes, and be certain it's happening in the amount, and the time scale we think it is?" said Minor.

The second principle is reversal traceability over time. "Can we actually measure when reversal happens? How easy is that to do? And how can we do the accounting around that?" he said.

The third is data transparency. "Can MVR be made clear about what's being measured, sharing that with all the stakeholders and doing it on a regular basis so that we can be certain about how things are changing and take corrective action when needed?" said Minor.

Finally, does MVR have positive structures? he asked. "Can it be designed in a way that minimizes disruption and creates the right incentives for individuals to actually report bad acting or poor results when they happen?"

"We should be putting pressure on producers and on the field, in general, to be pushing toward higher quality as much as possible."