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A new feedback mechanism linking forests, aerosols, and climate

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Abstract. The possible connections between the carbon balance of ecosystems and aerosol-cloud-climate interactions play a significant role in climate change studies. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas, whereas the net effect of atmospheric aerosols is to cool the climate. Here, we investigated the connection between forest-atmosphere carbon exchange and aerosol dynamics in the continental boundary layer by means of multiannual data sets of particle formation and growth rates, of CO₂ fluxes, and of monoterpene concentrations in a Scots pine forest in southern Finland. We suggest a new, interesting link and a potentially important feedback among forest ecosystem functioning, aerosols, and climate: Considering that globally increasing temperatures and CO₂ fertilization are likely to lead to increased photosynthesis and forest growth, an increase in forest biomass would increase emissions of non-methane biogenic volatile organic compounds and thereby enhance organic aerosol production. This feedback mechanism couples the climate effect of CO2 with that of aerosols in a novel way.

■ Final Revised Paper (PDF, 4181 KB) ■ Discussion Paper (ACPD)

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