

1 A Cenozoic record of the equatorial Pacific carbonate compensation depth

Atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations and climate are regulated on geological timescales by the balance between carbon input from volcanic and metamorphic outgassing and its removal by weathering feedbacks; these feedbacks involve the erosion of silicate rocks and organic-carbon-bearing rocks. The integrated effect of these processes is reflected in the calcium carbonate compensation depth, which is the oceanic depth at which calcium carbonate is dissolved. Here we present a carbonate accumulation record that covers the past 53 million years from a depth transect in the equatorial Pacific Ocean. The carbonate compensation depth tracks long-term ocean cooling, deepening from 3.0–3.5 kilometres during the early Cenozoic (approximately 55 million years ago) to 4.6 kilometres at present, consistent with an overall Cenozoic increase in weathering. We find large superimposed fluctuations in carbonate compensation depth during the middle and late Eocene. Using Earth system models, we identify changes in weathering and the mode of organic-carbon delivery as two key processes to explain these large-scale Eocene fluctuations of the carbonate compensation depth.

The Pacific, as the world's largest ocean, is intricately involved in the prominent changes in the global carbon cycle and climate system that took place during the Cenozoic¹. The equatorial Pacific makes a disproportionately large global contribution to biogenic sediment burial in the pelagic realm due to equatorial upwelling, and thus plays an important part in climate regulation¹. Expeditions 320 and 321 of the Integrated Ocean Drilling Program (IODP), the 'Pacific Equatorial Age Transect' (PEAT), exploited the northward Pacific plate trajectory during the Cenozoic to recover a continuous sediment sequence from the equatorial Pacific. Cores from eight sites were obtained, from the sea floor to basaltic basement (that is, aged between 53 and 18 million years (Myr) before present), near the past position of the Equator at successive crustal ages on the Pacific plate². Together with previous Deep Sea Drilling Project and Ocean Drilling Program drill cores, these sediments allow reconstruction of changes in the state, nature and variability of the global carbon cycle and climate system in unprecedented detail, from directly after the period of maximum Cenozoic warmth, through the onset of major glaciations, to the present.

Atmospheric CO₂ concentrations and climate are regulated on geological timescales by volcanic and metamorphic outgassing, weathering feedbacks involving the weathering of silicate and organic carbon (C_{org})-bearing rocks, and carbonate and C_{org} burial^{3,4}. The integrated effect of these processes dictates the carbonate saturation state of the oceans that is reflected in the carbonate compensation depth (CCD), which has been highly influential in understanding past changes in the marine carbon cycle^{5,6}. The CCD is a sediment property and occurs in the oceans where the downward flux of carbonate rain delivered from calcifying organisms is balanced by dissolution (Fig. 1), so that little or no carbonate is preserved in sediments below this depth. The CCD can be reconstructed using sediment cores^{5–8}.

Here we determine the evolution of the CCD by establishing the variation of net carbonate accumulation rates with respect to palaeodepth at multiple sites, using a common chronology and stratigraphic correlation. We then use carbon cycle models to explore viable mechanisms that may be responsible for the observed CCD variations; we highlight the importance of the supply of weathering-derived

solutes to the deep ocean, and changes in the partitioning—into labile and refractory components—of organic matter delivered to deep-sea sediments.

A Cenozoic CCD record

Our new reconstruction of how the CCD in the equatorial Pacific region evolved through the Cenozoic is shown in Fig. 2a, and is

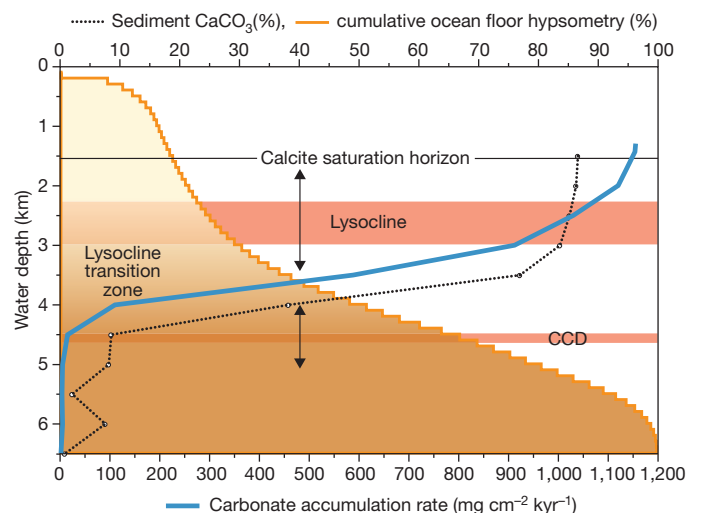


Figure 1 | Illustration of the position of the CCD and lysocline, and their relationship to ocean bathymetry, carbonate accumulation rate and CaCO₃ content. This figure shows the relationship between CCD, sediment CaCO₃ content (dotted black line), carbonate accumulation rate (blue line) and lysocline, in comparison with cumulative ocean floor hypsometry (orange line). The CCD, a sediment property, is defined as where carbonate rain is balanced by carbonate dissolution. Previously, it has been operationally defined to coincide with a fixed content of CaCO₃ (for example, 10%) in sediments⁵, or where the carbonate accumulation rate interpolates to zero⁶ (this second definition is advantageous as it is independent of non-carbonate supply or dilution effects). The lysocline is the horizon where dissolution becomes first noticeable (a sediment property), and is typically below the calcite saturation horizon.

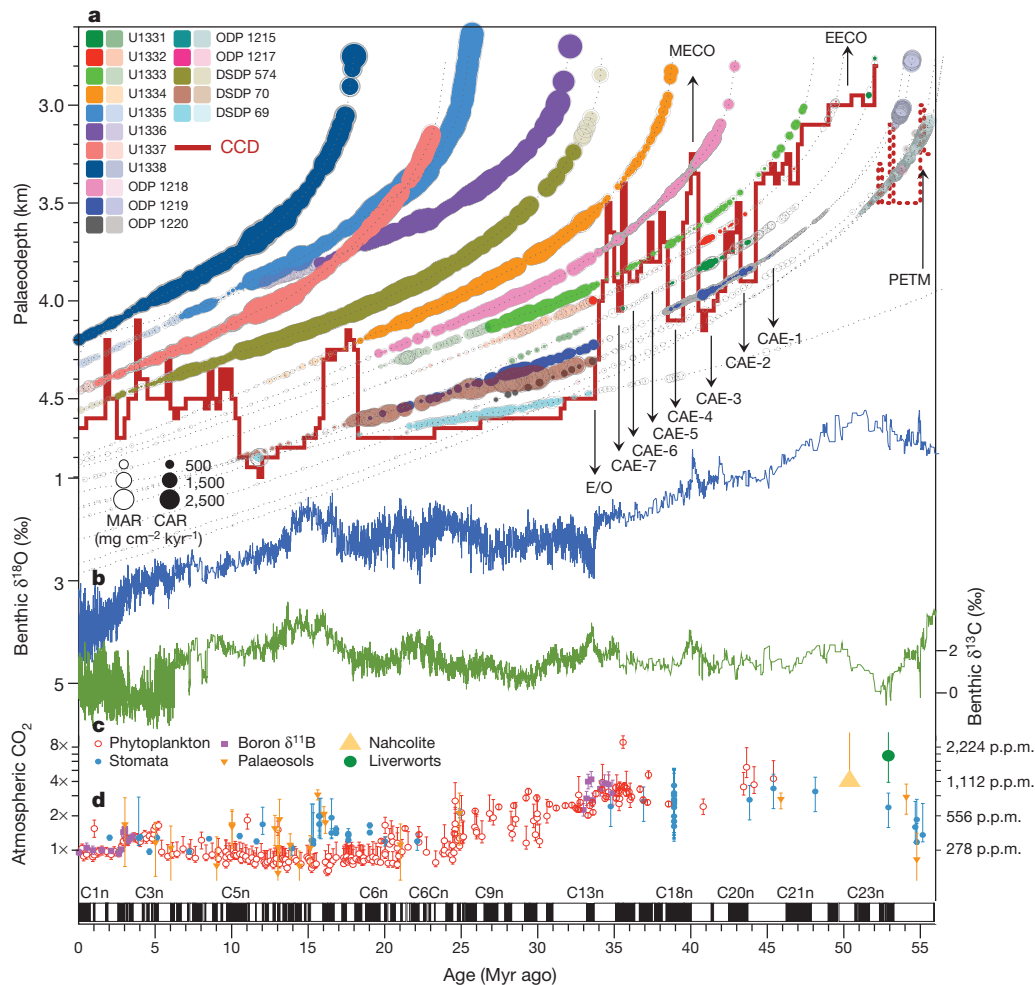


Figure 2 | CCD and carbonate accumulation rate reconstruction compared with published benthic foraminiferal $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ and $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ values and atmospheric CO_2 . **a**, Equatorial Pacific accumulation rate history as a function of geological age at the backtracked and unloaded palaeo-water depth, and using a palaeomagnetic polarity age scheme² plotted as black and white bars below the figure. Circle area is scaled by accumulation rate: carbonate accumulation rate (CAR; filled circles), total mass accumulation rate (MAR; open circles). Data are plotted with a lighter colour outside a $\pm 3.5^\circ$ band around the palaeo-equator. The position of the equatorial Pacific CCD is indicated by a solid red line (dashed red

line marks reconstruction from off-equatorial sites). See text for abbreviations. **b**, **c**, Benthic oxygen (**b**; blue curve, left-hand vertical axis) and carbon (**c**; green curve, right-hand vertical axis) isotope values from a global compilation⁹, reported relative to the VPDB (Vienna Pee Dee Belemnite) standard. **d**, Atmospheric CO_2 compilation and error bars from refs 16, 40; left-hand vertical axis, log CO_2 scale relative to pre-industrial CO_2 ($1\times = 278$ p.p.m.v.); right-hand vertical axis, log CO_2 scale in absolute values. Error bars are as in ref. 16; for example, for boron $\delta^{11}\text{B}$ error bars reflect long-term analytical reproducibility or internal precision, whichever is larger (at 95% confidence).

compared with reconstructions of foraminiferal benthic $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ and $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ (Fig. 2b and c) and atmospheric CO_2 reconstructions (Fig. 2d) (Supplementary Fig. 1 shows this as a plot of mass accumulation rate against age and palaeo-latitude, Supplementary Fig. 2 shows an enlarged version for the Eocene). The evolving palaeo-position of the CCD is determined as where the carbonate accumulation rates interpolated across the palaeo-depth transect reach zero as a function of depth. Overall, there is an intriguing correspondence of CCD deepening and deep ocean cooling⁹, with a deepening from 3–3.5 km during the early Cenozoic to 4.6 km at present, consistent with findings of an overall Cenozoic increase in silicate weathering^{10–13}. Superimposed on this overall deepening are repeated large CCD fluctuations during the middle and late Eocene.

We find that during the earliest Eocene (~56–53 Myr ago), the equatorial CCD generally occurred at a palaeo-depth of around 3.3–3.6 km, with superimposed ‘hyperthermal’-related CCD shoaling events^{9,14}. Between ~52 and 47 Myr ago, the CCD reached depths as shallow as 3 km, coincident with the Early Eocene Climatic Optimum (EECO)¹⁵, when atmospheric CO_2 concentrations, including their uncertainty bounds, reached an estimated ~1,100–3,000 parts per million by volume (p.p.m.v.)¹⁶, and the lowest benthic oxygen isotope

values (indicating peak deep-ocean temperature) throughout the Cenozoic were attained¹⁵.

From ~46 to 34 Myr ago, our record reveals a fluctuating and highly variable CCD⁸, resolving 5–7 CCD deepening and carbonate accumulation events (CAEs) with durations of several hundred thousand years to 1 Myr, interrupted by rapid CCD shoalings with an amplitude of ~0.5–1.0 km (CAE-1 to CAE-7; Fig. 2). The largest-magnitude fluctuation of the CCD during the middle and late Eocene coincided with carbonate accumulation event 3 (CAE-3)⁸, followed by a near 1-km shoaling that is coeval with the Middle Eocene Climatic Optimum (MECO)^{17,18}. A sustained large deepening (>1 km) then terminated a late Eocene interval of variability and coincided with the Eocene/Oligocene (E/O) transition¹⁹. This terminal early Oligocene CCD deepening was contemporaneous with ice sheet growth, sea-level fall and a shift in carbonate deposition from shallow to deep waters^{19,20}. The deeper (~4.6 km) and apparently more stable CCD of the Oligocene was interrupted again in the Miocene at ~18.5 Myr ago by a ~600-m shoaling, lasting for around 2.5 Myr, which was previously described as the ‘carbonate famine’⁶. The CCD deepened again to around 4.7 km at ~16 Myr ago as a consequence of increased carbonate productivity⁶. For this deepening

event at ~16 Myr ago, the analysis of the PEAT data alone is complicated by the latitudinal movement of some sites (U1332–U1334) outside the Pacific equatorial zone (Supplementary Fig. 1). However, the interpretation is supported by previous work⁶ and corroborated by large increases in carbonate mass accumulation rates at shallower depths of Sites U1335, U1337 and U1338 (Fig. 2). An interval with the deepest equatorial Pacific Cenozoic CCD of around 4.8 km was terminated by shoaling at ~10.5 Myr ago in a rapid “carbonate crash” event²¹. For the remainder of the Neogene, the equatorial Pacific CCD resided around 4.5 km depth with superimposed fluctuations in carbonate accumulation related to shorter-term climatic oscillations on Milankovitch timescales (20–400 kyr), as well as to the periodic deposition of diatom mats².

Eocene CCD fluctuations

Two features of the equatorial Pacific CCD behaviour during the Cenozoic stand out and demand further investigation. First, the Eocene CCD resided at an average depth of around 3.5 km, or ~1 km shallower than during post-Eocene time, with a geologically rapid and permanent deepening at the E/O transition. The E/O CCD deepening has previously been ascribed to ice expansion on Antarctica and sea-level fall, driving a shelf-to-basin shift in carbonate partitioning^{19,20}. In contrast, for Eocene CAEs we lack evidence²² for large bi-polar fluctuations in ice volume, so that alternative mechanisms must be explored.

Second, the middle to late Eocene was characterized by five major CCD fluctuations that lasted between 250 kyr and 1 Myr and had amplitudes between 200 and 900 m. The ~900-m CCD shoaling at ~40.5 Myr ago, a globally recognized feature¹⁷ associated with the transition from CAE-3 to MECO, approaches the amplitude of (but is opposite in sign to) the CCD shift during the E/O transition from greenhouse to icehouse. We currently lack a definite confirmation that other CAEs are represented in records outside the equatorial Pacific, primarily owing to the scarcity of continuous, well-dated pelagic sedimentary records at an array of palaeo-depth positions, but we note that data from ODP Site 929E in the equatorial Atlantic tentatively support our hypothesis of CAEs as global features (Supplementary Fig. 3). In the equatorial Pacific, CAEs coincided with increased biogenic silica accumulation rates and shifts between calcareous and siliceous microfossils^{8,18}. CAEs also coincided with enhanced burial of C_{org} in an Eocene Pacific Ocean otherwise characterized by productivity similar to today but with much faster water-column recycling; these increases in C_{org} burial start from a much lower Eocene baseline of C_{org} preserved in sediments, averaging only one-tenth of the present day value^{8,23–25}.

Carbon system modelling

To quantitatively explore the potential of different processes to generate the CCD signal reconstructed for the middle to late Eocene, we made use of steady-state results from an Earth system model of intermediate complexity (GENIE)^{26,27}, and investigated non-steady-state behaviour of shorter-lived processes with the palaeo-configuration of the LOSCAR box model²⁸ (Supplementary Information). Overall, the results from both models significantly reduce the number of possible mechanisms that are consistent with the reconstructed CCD history, either by demonstrating that a number of possible processes are not able to sustain large CCD changes over long enough time periods (>250 kyr), or by inconsistency with other proxy observations.

We start by assuming that middle–late Eocene CCD fluctuations represent alternating steady states of marine carbon cycling and that all carbonate weathering and climate feedbacks had time to operate and equilibrate. The justification for this is that the typical silicate weathering compensation time is of the order of ~0.1 Myr (refs 4, 29), much shorter than the duration of the reconstructed CCD fluctuations (0.25–1 Myr; Fig. 2). We then test the sensitivity of a range of established hypotheses for changing the CCD.

Processes we have investigated that either do not appear to be consistent with reconstructed amplitudes and durations of CCD shifts or are inconsistent with other proxy evidence (Supplementary Information) include: (1) C_{org} surface export rain ratio changes, which we exclude because the resultant CCD variations are too small in comparison to what we observe; (2) a shift in carbonate deposition between the shelf and deep ocean, for which a repeated large-scale oscillation in ice mass would be required that has so far not been observed; (3) a shift of deep ocean ventilation between a dominant Southern Ocean and dominant North Pacific source, which would lead to opposite CCD behaviour in different ocean basins; and (4) changes in deep-sea temperatures and the Mg and Ca concentration of sea water^{4,9,30–32}, which both modify the stability of calcium carbonate. For these, the CCD can be affected only by relatively subtle changes in the offset between CCD and lysocline because of the need to ultimately re-balance sources and sinks. We note that we cannot completely rule out the potential for ventilation changes to be compatible with our CCD data, and this will need to be resolved by future drilling in the North Atlantic.

Next, we focus on two model scenarios that do have the potential to sustain CCD changes of the required duration and amplitude: (1) perturbations to continental weathering and variations in solute input to the deep ocean, driving synchronous changes in CCD and lysocline depth globally, and/or (2) changes in the partitioning of C_{org} flux between labile and refractory components, affecting both deep-sea carbonate dissolution and the thickness of the lysocline transition zone (and hence partially decoupling the CCD from the lysocline).

To explore the first mechanism, we computed the steady-state CCD position in the equatorial Pacific through a range of atmospheric CO_2 values relative to pre-industrial modern ($1 \times CO_2 = 278$ p.p.m.v.) and against a range of solute weathering fluxes of Ca and HCO_3^- to the deep ocean in GENIE. Because in GENIE the solute flux to the deep ocean is the total weathering flux minus what is deposited on the shelves, changes in solute flux implicitly model either a change of the total flux, or shelf–basin partitioning. Our results (Fig. 3a) indicate that, for a given value of atmospheric CO_2 , changes in solute flux to the deep ocean are in principle able to achieve changes in the equatorial Pacific CCD of the amplitude suggested by observations (several hundred metres to >1 km). For the Cenozoic, this supports the initial correlation between increased silicate weathering rates and CCD deepening.

However, other carbon cycle impacts resulting from the assumed driver of changes in solute supply must also be considered. On <1-Myr timescales, tectonic uplift is too slow, and there is no convincing evidence for repeated large-scale sea level fluctuations during the middle-to-late Eocene that could alternately shift the locus of carbonate deposition between shelf and deep ocean. Therefore, increasing solute supply should be coupled to increased weathering, a warmer climate and higher CO_2 , unless changes in orbital configuration significantly enhance or reduce monsoon circulation (at constant CO_2), which could affect weathering fluxes via effects on precipitation intensity and distribution (which is not tested here). Our modelling reveals that increasing atmospheric CO_2 with fixed weathering (that is, with no weathering–temperature feedback enabled), results in a shallower CCD. This is a consequence of nonlinearities in the carbonate system and reflects a deepening of the lysocline at the expense of the CCD and contraction of the lysocline transition zone. When this is combined with the response of increased weathering by activating the full silicate weathering feedback, we find an unexpected result: when progressively increasing the rate of prescribed CO_2 outgassing in a series of GENIE experiments, atmospheric CO_2 and weathering flux happen to co-vary in such a way that they result in a largely invariant CCD depth (Fig. 3a).

This result is subject to a number of model uncertainties and assumptions, including the degree of nonlinearity of weathering with climate, for which we have assumed a simple global-average response²⁹, and a 1:1 partitioning between carbonate and silicate

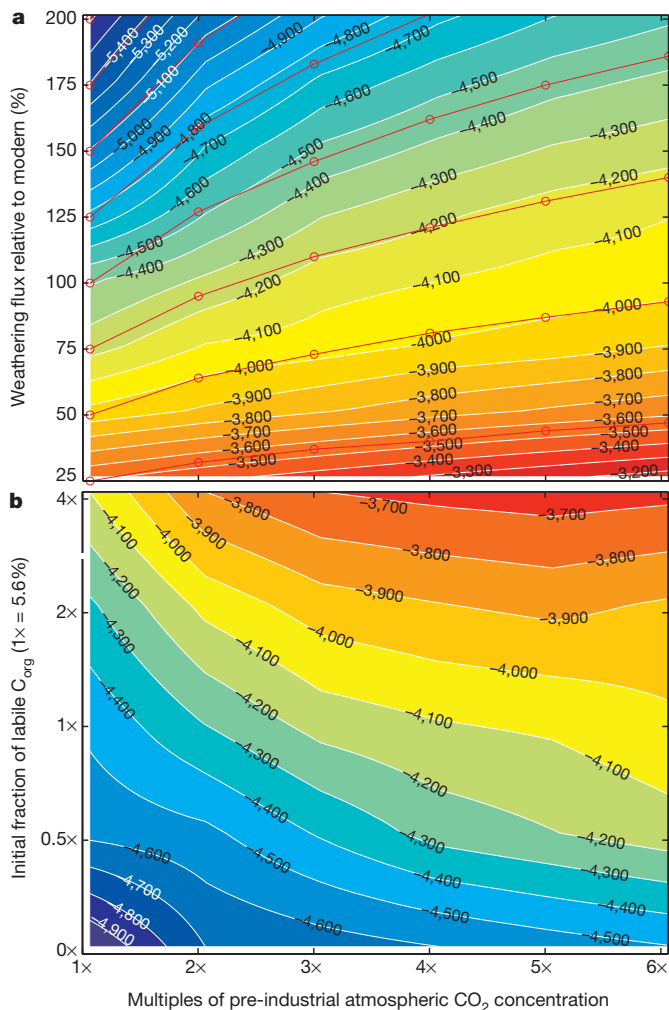


Figure 3 | CCD predicted by the GENIE steady state model. **a**, Eocene CCD plotted as contours (numbers show depth in m) as a function of atmospheric CO₂ concentrations (horizontal axis) and total net deep-sea weathering flux (compared to modern value of 10 Tmol yr⁻¹; vertical axis). All models were run without direct feedback on silicate weathering. The red lines indicate the increase in weathering flux when moving from 1x to 6x CO₂ silicate weathering feedback (using a partitioning of total initial weathering into silicate and carbonate weathering in a 1:1 ratio). **b**, As **a**, but plotting CCD as function of CO₂ (horizontal axis) and initial fraction of labile C_{org} (vertical axis). This model ensemble was run with 100% net weathering compared to modern, and a surface CaCO₃:C_{org} rain ratio of 0.2.

weathering. The negative feedback in regulating atmospheric CO₂ on geological timescales due to weathering of continental materials had been included in the original BLAG³³ modelling study and is also used in GENIE and LOSCAR, but there are significant uncertainties attached to this parameterization. For example, the strength of this feedback has been shown to lead to significant variations in the carbon cycle response to weathering, but remains poorly constrained²⁹. Although different weathering formulations were not tested with GENIE, we predict that the weak relationship between CCD and atmospheric CO₂ (Fig. 3a) probably indicates that additional silicate weathering changes in response to temperature will result in only small deviations from an invariant CCD after reaching steady state. Our results illustrate the non-intuitive nature of CCD behaviour and that higher marine carbonate deposition under a warmer, higher-CO₂ climate need not require a deeper observed CCD.

Independent observations of sediment composition and changes of dominant microfossil groups lead us to also assess whether changes in the behaviour of organic matter driving dissolution during the

middle-late Eocene played a role. The pertinent observations are shifts between siliceous and calcareous microfossils and an increase of C_{org} burial flux during CAE-3, with simultaneous increased burial fluxes of calcareous and biosiliceous sediment^{1,2,23–25}. For example, sediment smear slides from the equatorial Pacific reveal a major increase in diatom content from 0% to near 50% near the end of this event²⁴. The relative changes in biogenic silica are much larger than those in calcareous plankton, and indicate major temporal reorganization of biotic composition rather than simple changes in productivity levels. In addition, the amount of C_{org} preserved in Eocene equatorial Pacific sediments is an order of magnitude smaller than today, despite a productivity that was not very different to the present^{8,24}, suggesting a more nutrient enriched deep ocean.

We investigate the viability of a 'labile organic matter' hypothesis to help explain the CCD fluctuations. We repeat the GENIE net-weathering supply analysis but now change the partitioning between 'labile' C_{org}, which is redissolved in the upper water column and drives carbonate dissolution, and 'refractory' C_{org}, which reaches the sea floor and is available for further remineralization or carbon burial. This modifies the ocean's dissolved inorganic carbon as well as the net carbonate preservation flux³⁴. This hypothesis builds on, but differs from, the classic glacial CO₂ 'rain rate' hypothesis³⁵, which postulated that changes in the CaCO₃ flux to ocean sediments, at a fixed particulate organic carbon (POC) supply, could be an effective way of changing atmospheric CO₂. However, the rebalancing of sedimentation versus weathering—'carbonate compensation'—while helping to drive a potential 60 p.p.m. fall in atmospheric CO₂ for a 40% decrease in CaCO₃:POC export ratio, also leads to a CCD that changed relatively little (Supplementary Fig. 5). This mechanism may also not be compatible with the consequence of any POC 'ballasting' by CaCO₃ (refs 36, 37).

Results for modelling the labile organic matter hypothesis (Fig. 3b) indicate that a smaller initial fraction of labile organic matter results in a net increase in carbonate accumulation in regions of high productivity such as the eastern equatorial Pacific, Southern Ocean and equatorial Atlantic, owing to reduced water column dissolution. Carbonate compensation acts to mitigate the CCD changes but with a spatially heterogeneous pattern, leaving a deeper CCD in the eastern equatorial Pacific (Supplementary Fig. 9) and Atlantic, but resulting in smaller changes in the western Pacific. The modelled changes in carbonate accumulation in the eastern equatorial Pacific in this scenario indicate that CCD changes of ~300–600 m are possible for a 2–4-fold change in the initial fraction of labile organic matter (Fig. 3b), roughly equivalent to the amplitude of all but the largest MECO-associated fluctuations in the record¹⁷. Although GENIE does not explicitly distinguish labile from refractory carbon, we are effectively assuming that surface biological productivity and the total flux of POC to deep-sea sediments need not change, but that it is either predominantly available for oxidation and driving carbonate dissolution (labile), or it is largely preserved and buried (refractory) and does not drive substantial additional carbonate dissolution.

CCD buffering

Overall, our modelling also reveals that the CCD is remarkably well buffered against short- and long-term perturbations of the global carbon cycle. Only a few of the mechanisms commonly envisaged as important in controlling the CCD in practice have the capacity to change the amplitude of the steady-state CCD sufficiently and for long enough to be compatible with our reconstruction. In contrast, our labile organic matter hypothesis is consistent with shifts between siliceous and calcareous microfossil groups, and changes in C_{org} preservation and burial²⁴, and results in a large enough CCD shift to explain variability during the middle-late Eocene, perhaps in concert with simultaneous weathering flux changes. We note that the initial depth of the CCD may amplify these changes as its response to forcing is a function of the total amount of calcite available to be dissolved

over a given depth range of sea floor (Supplementary Information and Supplementary Fig. 4). This suggests a smaller compensation capacity during Eocene time (due to a shallower CCD), which results in a higher sensitivity of carbonate preservation for a given carbon perturbation.

The Pacific CCD record presented here offers a new view of the evolution of Cenozoic ocean carbonate chemistry and provides the basis for future quantitative tests of multiple possible controlling mechanisms. The close correspondence of deep-ocean temperatures derived from benthic foraminiferal $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ records and the equatorial Pacific CCD is intriguing and suggests a close coupling of climate and carbon cycle feedbacks during the Cenozoic, tied to an overall increase in weathering during that time.

METHODS SUMMARY

Carbonate measurements were performed by coulometry², and supplemented with data from ODP and DSDP Legs (Supplementary Table 1). Accumulation rates were determined by using high-resolution age models and bulk dry density measurements. Stratigraphic correlation of sites was achieved through bio- and magnetostratigraphy, X-ray fluorescence data and physical property measurements³⁸, adjusted to the age model of the PEAT expeditions² revised to new site correlations³⁸. Present-day site positions were backtracked using published stage poles². Palaeo-depths were computed including backstripping and using standard methodology⁶. The CCD was semiquantitatively determined by plotting available carbonate accumulation rate data in 250-kyr windows, and fitting a regression line through carbonate accumulation rates decreasing with depth. GENIE Earth system modelling was based on Eocene boundary conditions from previous studies^{26,27} using a Palaeocene palaeobathymetry (model SVN revision 7491). Scenarios were investigated as open system runs and with enabled climate feedback (temperature responsive to greenhouse gas forcing) until steady state conditions were achieved (~150 kyr). Ensembles were run on the University of Southampton high-performance computing system IRIDIS3. All scenarios were run for atmospheric CO_2 ranging from $1\times$ to $6\times$ pre-anthropogenic ($1\times = 278$ p.p.m.v.). The scenario in Fig. 3a ('weathering') varied total weathering fluxes from 25% to 200% of modern DIC values in 25% steps ($100\% = 10 \text{ Tmol yr}^{-1}$)³⁹. For all runs bioturbation was switched off to speed up the achievement of steady state. All models were run adding a background wetland CH_4 flux at $5\times$ pre-industrial levels, and with a constant detrital flux of $0.18 \text{ g cm}^{-2} \text{ kyr}^{-1}$. The net-weathering scenario in Fig. 3a was then re-run with varying values for the initial fraction of labile organic carbon 'POM2' (standard GENIE value ~5.6%, additional runs with zero, half, double and quadruple standard value), detailed in a previous publication³⁴. Additional GENIE scenarios are described in Supplementary Information.

Full Methods and any associated references are available in the online version of the paper at www.nature.com/nature.

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METHODS

Data generation. Carbonate measurements were performed by coulometry during IODP Expeditions 320/321², and supplemented with previously published data from ODP and DSDP Legs (Supplementary Table 1). Mass and carbonate accumulation rates were determined by using high-resolution age models and bulk dry density measurements. Stratigraphic correlation of sites was achieved through bio- and magnetostratigraphy, XRF data and physical property measurements³⁸, and all data are adjusted to the age model of the PEAT expeditions². Present-day site positions were backtracked using published stage poles². Palaeo-depths were computed assuming subsidence proportional to the square root of age, following previous approaches⁶, starting from an assumed ridge crest depth of 2.75 km, and taking into account sediment loading. Uncertainties in the palaeo-depth history are a function of (1) age control, (2) knowledge of the palaeo-depth of the ridge crest, (3) the subsidence history of drill sites, and (4) the sediment loading history for each site. For this study, we assumed a palaeo-depth of the ridge of 2.75 km, fitted subsidence parameters according to the determined basement age and present-day depth and backstripped the sediment loading following previous work⁶. Age models for individual sites are based on an integrated palaeomagnetic and biostratigraphic framework largely following the Expedition dates², but revised to new site correlations³⁸. Biostratigraphic ages from previous ODP and DSDP sites were updated to this age framework. The new carbonate compensation depths were semiquantitatively determined by plotting available carbonate accumulation rate data in 250-kyr windows, and fitting a regression line through the carbonate accumulation rates that are decreasing with depth.

Earth system modelling. GENIE Earth system modelling was based on previous studies^{26,27} using a Palaeocene palaeobathymetry, using model SVN revision 7491 (contact authors for detailed access information). Scenarios were investigated as open system runs and with enabled climate feedback (temperature responsive to greenhouse gas forcing) until steady state conditions were achieved (~ 150 kyr), using the following Eocene boundary conditions²⁷: a solar constant reduced by 0.46% for Palaeogene time ($1,361.7 \text{ W m}^{-2}$); a reduced salinity of 33.9 p.s.u.; a constant $\text{CaCO}_3:\text{C}_{\text{org}}$ ratio of 0.2, and with seawater concentrations of $\text{Mg} \approx 30 \text{ mmol kg}^{-1}$ and $\text{Ca} \approx 15 \text{ mmol kg}^{-1}$. Ensembles were run on the Southampton high performance computing system IRIDIS3. All scenarios

were run for atmospheric CO_2 concentrations ranging from $1\times$ to $6\times$ pre-anthropogenic ($1\times = 278 \text{ p.p.m.v.}$). Bottom water temperatures in the model runs corresponding to increasing CO_2 levels are (in $^{\circ}\text{C}$) 6.6, 9.4, 11.1, 12.3, 13.3 and 14.2, respectively. For all runs bioturbation was switched off to speed up the achievement of steady state. All models were run adding a background wetland CH_4 flux at $5\times$ pre-industrial levels, and with a constant detrital flux of $0.18 \text{ g cm}^{-2} \text{ kyr}^{-1}$. The scenario in Fig. 3a ('weathering') varied total weathering fluxes from 25% to 200% of modern DIC values in 25% steps ($100\% = 10 \text{ Tmol yr}^{-1}$)³⁹. The net-weathering scenario in Fig. 3a was then also re-run with varying values for the initial fraction of labile organic carbon parameter 'POM2' (detailed in ref. 34, standard GENIE value $\sim 5.6\%$, additional runs with zero, half, double and quadruple standard value). Results from further GENIE scenario runs not resulting in large CCD changes (rain ratio and Mg/Ca changes) are detailed in Supplementary Information, and we also include a description of transient model runs using the LOSCAR box model²⁸. For the supplementary 'rain ratio' scenario we varied $\text{CaCO}_3:\text{C}_{\text{org}}$ ratios from 0.1 to 0.225 in 0.025 steps, using a fixed 50% modern weathering supply to the deep ocean. A supplementary 'Mg/Ca' scenario varied seawater Mg and Ca concentrations using previously published values³² for a Mg/Ca range from 1.3 to 5.1, also using a 50% weathering flux compared to modern.

Palaeo-depth uncertainties. The vertical uncertainty of palaeo-depth trajectories is likely to be largest for the earliest part of our records, attributable to the initially more rapid thermal cooling and subsidence at the palaeo-ridge (basement age error $\pm 0.5 \text{ Myr}$), and due to absolute uncertainties in the palaeo-depth of the ridge crest (depth error $\pm 350 \text{ m}$)⁴¹. Reconstructions become more robust for each site moving forward in time, as the thermal subsidence rate attenuates. We therefore estimate the uncertainty of absolute site palaeo-depths to be of the order of several hundred metres in the early part of the reconstruction for each site, and $\sim 250 \text{ m}$ for the remaining record. The palaeo-depth-transect approach however, means that most of the included sites originate from the same Pacific plate ridge segment, thereby reducing the relative error of depth reconstructions.

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