



NATIONAL CLIMATE ASSESSMENT: THE NORTHWEST

The National Climate Assessment is the most comprehensive report on climate change impacts in the United States. Here are a few things we learned from the assessment about impacts in the Northwest region: Oregon, Washington, and Idaho.

Heat

- Climate change is happening now, and is primarily caused by carbon pollution from fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas. How much the climate changes in the future is up to us.
- From its shorelines to its deserts and mountain forests, climate change is already altering the dramatic landscape of the Northwest — with serious consequences for the people who live there.
- Over the last century, temperatures in the region have increased by approximately 1.3 degrees Fahrenheit.
- If carbon emissions continue to increase, regional temperatures could be nearly 10 degrees Fahrenheit higher by the 2080s — a dramatic change likely to bring harmful and unforeseen consequences.
- In some areas, mountain snowpack has decreased 20 percent since the 1950s, and spring snowmelt occurs 30 days earlier.
- The loss of snowpack will affect hydropower generation, irrigation of about \$17 billion worth of crops, and habitat for wildlife like salmon. Rapid snowmelt also increases the risk of water-borne disease outbreaks.

Oceans

- Carbon pollution from fossil fuels is making the oceans more acidic. Seawater off the coast of the Northwest is already some of the most acidified in the world, posing a major threat to a fish and shellfish industry worth nearly \$500 million.
- More than 140,000 acres of coastal land in Washington and Oregon are within a few feet of the high tide line. Sea level rise threatens the Northwest's coastal roads, ferry terminals, and homes.
- Rising ocean temperatures may make toxic algae blooms more common in the Puget Sound, which poses a health risk to people who harvest and eat shellfish.

Wildfires

- Warmer and drier conditions are increasing the number and size of wildfires in the western United States. The average area burned in the Northwest each year could quadruple by the 2080s.
- Wildfires not only destroy forests and property; they are bad for our health. Smoke exposure increases emergency room visits and hospitalizations.