

## *In Our View: Climate Change is Real*

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**Highlight:** recent climate change report from the federal government is stark and unflinching. To summarize, it says the U.S. economy could lose hundreds of billions of dollars annually by the end of the century; that climate-influenced pollution and disease will result; and that natural resource industries must adapt or face extinction.

This follows a United Nations report issued last month that declared humans have until 2030 to significantly reduce carbon emissions or deal with an irreversible climate calamity.

### **Body**

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A recent climate change report from the federal government is stark and unflinching. To summarize, it says the U.S. economy could lose hundreds of billions of dollars annually by the end of the century; that climate-influenced pollution and disease will result; and that natural resource industries must adapt or face extinction.

This follows a United Nations report issued last month that declared humans have until 2030 to significantly reduce carbon emissions or deal with an irreversible climate calamity.

Contrary to shameful assertions by climate change deniers, the latest report is not the result of a handful of agenda-driven advocates. The U.S. Global Change Research Program involves 13 federal agencies. The report, the "Fourth National Climate Assessment, Vol. II," was compiled by more than 1,000 people, including 300 scientists - about half of them from outside government.

The first volume, released a year ago, concluded that there is "no convincing alternative explanation" for the changing climate other than "human activities, especially emissions of greenhouse gases." Greenhouse gases from the burning of fossil fuels help trap heat in the atmosphere, and concern about the impact is nothing new; the theory of the "greenhouse effect" dates to the 1800s, and it has been a policy issue in the United States since the 1970s.

Now, David Easterling of the National Centers for Environmental Information says, "The global average temperature is much higher and is rising more rapidly than anything modern civilization has experienced, and this warming trend can only be explained by human activities."

The latest U.S. government report is long on details and short on light reading. Notably, it contains a specific chapter detailing the impact of climate change for each region of the country, including the Northwest, and it stresses that our bucolic slice of the world is facing dire impacts:

n "Warming and related changes in climate are already affecting aspects of the Northwest's identity such as its natural resource economy. The built systems that support Northwest residents and the health of residents themselves are also already experiencing the effects of climate change."

n "Specialty crops, including apples and other tree fruits, are already experiencing changes. Higher spring temperatures have led to earlier flowering, which can lead to a mismatch with the availability of pollinators required for fruit setting (the process of flowers becoming fruit) and can affect fruit quality as well as yield."

n "Forests in the interior Northwest are changing rapidly because of increasing wildfire and insect and disease damage, attributed largely to a changing climate. These changes are expected to increase as temperatures increase."

## In Our View: Climate Change is Real

n "Children and youth, in general, will likely experience cumulative physical and mental health effects of climate change over their lifetimes due to increased exposure to extreme weather events."

Those are merely snippets from a 13,000-word chapter detailing the role climate change is playing in the Northwest. In short, a changing climate will alter the world we leave for our children and grandchildren - an assertion echoed by a vast majority of people who study the climate for a living.

The question then becomes: What can we do about it? In Tuesday's paper, we will editorially take a look at how the Northwest should prepare for this changing environment.

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