

White House climate report: U.S. changes already apparent

Blogging on EARTH

The climate status report released today by the White House includes no new research; instead, it is a synthesis of existing scientific data and studies. But the report sums up this information by adding a firm message: The United States is already feeling the impact of climate change — and should therefore take mitigating action sooner rather than later.

Since 1990, Congress has required the [U.S. Global Change Research Program](#) (an interagency undertaking between the White House and 13 federal agencies, including NOAA, NASA and DOE) to issue a national plan for federal climate change research — basically, determine research goals and priorities as a basis for deciding policy — every 10 years, and requires a national assessment from the [U.S. Climate Change Science Program](#) of human-induced climate change's impacts on the country every four years. (The last national assessment, released in 2008 during the Bush administration, [was considerably overdue.](#))

The new report, "Global Climate Change Impacts in the United States," emphasizes many of the now well-known harbingers of climate change (thanks in large part to the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize-winning [IPCC report](#)): more drought and wildfires in the Southwest, heat waves in the Northeast, more local coastal flooding due to sea-level rise, increased heavy downpours in some parts of the country (causing increased flooding and waterborne diseases) and water shortages for drinking, agriculture and power generation, particularly in the West.

The emphasis on regional and local impacts of climate change is intentional, said NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco in a press release accompanying the report, adding, "It literally affects people in their backyards." But, the press release noted, the report isn't a policy outline, and doesn't direct the White House on what mitigation measures to take.

Following the rollout of the report today, there's a reception tomorrow at the Capitol Visitor Center; Lubchenco and White House science advisor John Holdren will be there, among others.

The results of the study are available [online](#); there's more info on the report at the [White House Office of Science and Technology Policy](#), which oversaw the report. (Supposedly there was some video available today at [NASA TV](#) too, but I couldn't get it to stream properly.)

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