

USDA on global warming

## Climate report adds more gloom

Review out today offers clearer picture of how warming will affect scenery familiar to Utahns

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A landscape plagued with dust storms and drought, rangeland that won't support cattle, streams too hot for trout, forests felled by beetles and fire - it's all part of the scenario painted in a new report on climate change by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The projections are not exactly new.

Many of them have been reported by scientists and the media in the past five years.

But they do offer a clearer picture of how the impacts of global climate change are not limited to Arctic ice and tropical islands and that climate change will have profound impacts on the mountains, streams and range familiar to Utahns and others in the West.

"The trends are in place," said Fee Busby, a rangeland ecologist at Utah State University who has seen parts of the USDA's draft report. "The trends are going to continue."

Attempts late last week to reach the USDA's Washington office were unsuccessful. But, in advisories about the report, the agency points out that its conclusions will be used to help set priorities for "research, observation and decision support needs."

Part of a broader federal review of climate change, the 200-plus-page report focuses on the next 25 to 50 years. It had 38 authors, was reviewed by 14 scientists and uses more than 1,000 references, the agency said.

"The report has more than 80 findings on the effects of climate change in the United States," a pre-release advisory said.

Busby noted that this report follows up on a similar review done more than five years ago. In many respects, it confirms and clarifies those earlier findings, he said.

"And those [projected impacts] are going to have major impacts on the forests and rangeland and everybody who uses them," Busby said.

Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. has signed Utah onto the Western Climate Initiative, a multi-state effort to assess and tackle the problem on a regional basis. In addition, he convened a yearlong task force of industry, environmentalists and government agencies that have roles in dealing with climate change.

Randy Parker, executive director of the Utah Farm Bureau Federation, served on the task force. And, although he remains skeptical that humans are behind climate change, he agrees that Utah's agriculture community is faced with dealing with the changes they see around them.

His organization has visited the USDA in Washington to push for planting drought-tolerant species in vulnerable rangeland.

Meanwhile, farmers are coping with delayed planting schedules and unusually dry soils, he said

"There are ecosystem impacts on whatever is happening to our climate," Parker said.

Earlier this month, the USDA's national task force on air quality met in Salt Lake City and discussed climate change, among other subjects. Some panel members said it was important that farmers play a role in shaping legislation on controlling the greenhouse gasses blamed for global warming.

It will be one way for farmers, ranchers and foresters to get credit for the positive impacts their industry has in dealing with climate change, some said.

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**Sneak preview**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is expected to release its final report, "The Effects of Climate Change on Agriculture, Land Resources, Water Resources and Biodiversity," today. The agency's projections say:

\* **Arid lands can expect increased erosion**, lost species, more drought, severe rainstorms, erosion and probably an expansion of deserts.

\* **Rangelands so damaged that there will be major economic losses** to the livestock industry, thanks to heat waves and invasive plant species.

\* **Forests ravaged by insect infestations** and wildfire that will contribute to climate change rather than helping to solve it.

\* **Streams too hot and too low** to support historic fish populations and diminished in their ability to provide clean water.

The report will be posted online this morning at [www.climatescience.gov/Library/sap/sap4-3/default.php](http://www.climatescience.gov/Library/sap/sap4-3/default.php).

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