

Scientists study impact of climate on NV

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Researchers are launching a \$21 million study to determine the impacts of a warming climate on Nevada and its precious water supply.

The five-year project will involve scientists from the Desert Research Institute, University of Nevada campuses at Reno and Las Vegas, and Nevada State College.

They said they hope the findings can be used to help guide decisions by land and water managers in the arid state.

Among other issues, scientists will study the impacts of a warming climate on the Colorado River that provides water to Las Vegas and the Sierra snowpack so important to Reno.

Nick Lancaster, a desert geomorphologist at DRI and project investigator, said the study will try to pinpoint effects on people and ecosystems.

"This is really about the effects of climate change, developing the capability to demonstrate what those effects are and to predict what they will be in the future to help make decisions," Lancaster told the Reno Gazette-Journal.

The National Science Foundation contributed \$15 million and Nevada's higher education system nearly \$6.6 million for the project.

Nevada is collaborating with researchers in Idaho and New Mexico, who will conduct similar studies of climate change.

Plans call for monitoring stations to be established in north-central Nevada and southern Nevada. The stations would monitor aspects of climate change at different elevations and landscapes.

Temperatures, wind speed, precipitation, solar radiation and soil moisture would be measured.

Instruments attached to trees will measure their growth, while webcams will record when plants sprout from the ground.

"What we're really interested in is trends that are continuing in a specific direction," said Scott Mensing, geography chair at UNR and a project investigator.

The importance of climate change on Nevada's water supply can't be emphasized enough, he added.

"We could be facing some very, very difficult times in terms of decisions about water," Mensing said. "I think this is one of the critical environmental issues we face as a world at this point."

Information from: Reno Gazette-Journal, www.rgj.com

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2008/11/07/state/n115141S87.DTL>

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