

Southern Oregon Climate Action Now

SOCAN

Confronting Climate Change

Climate Change in the Oregon 9th Senate District



May 2023

History, Projections, and Consequences

1. The temperature has risen some 1°F during the last half of the 20th Century and may rise 8°F by the end of the 21st Century.
2. While precipitation has been steady and is likely to remain so annually, wetter winters and drier summers.
3. The trend of declining snowfall will continue through the century, possibly dropping to 10% of historic levels by 2100.
4. These precipitation projections, combined with the trend towards increasing heavy rainfall and reducing light rainfall will likely increase flooding and compromise irrigation availability in those months when it is most needed.
5. Several important forest species both commercially and in terms of forest composition will likely be compromised as climate change overtakes the District.
6. The western wildfire season is already 105 days longer than in the 1970s, while reduced snowpack, warmer summers and earlier snowmelt will increase wildfire risk, with 200 – 300% of the area burned by mid-century.
7. Agricultural activities such as wine growing that depend on temperature and water are likely to be threatened through the century.
8. As sea levels rise, increased urban storm damage and destruction will be probable in addition to the loss of beaches and coastal wetlands.
9. Those engaged in agriculture, forestry or fisheries will be most affected by the forthcoming climate trends, will need most to adapt, and probably should be most supportive of mitigation efforts.
10. The main climate impacts to health are likely to be: storms, floods, and sea level rise. The main health concerns will be: disruption in core services, injuries, displacement, landslides, income loss, economic instability, and mental health impacts. Vulnerable communities will be: low-income households, older adults, people living on steep slopes, farmers of fish and shellfish, first responders, and children and pregnant women.
11. To achieve required emissions reduction goals, we need to reduce emissions 45% below 2010 levels by 2030; this requires immediate action!

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For more information on these points, see the full summary at: <http://socan.eco/oregon-legislative-districts/>

Oregon Senate District 9 Climate Summary

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Climate Change in the Oregon 9th Senate District

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July, 2017

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February, 2023

Global and Regional Temperature:

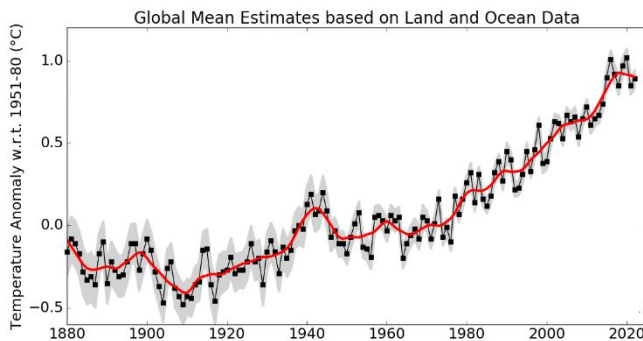


Figure 1. Historic global temperature trend (NASA 2023).

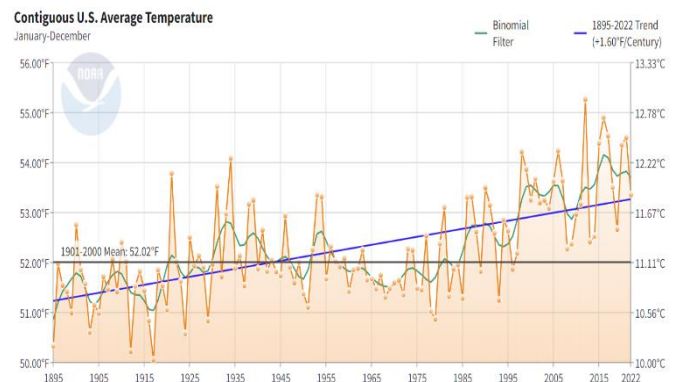


Figure 2. Historic U.S temperature trend. (NOAA 2023).

Data from NASA and NOAA reveal that the Global and U.S. atmospheric temperatures have increased substantially since 1880 (Figures 1 and 2) with the greatest effect occurring in the last five decades.

Global temperature projections to 2100 provided by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2021) Assessment Report 6 (Figure 3) were based on Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs). Discussed by Hausfather (2018), these pathways represent an advance over the Representative Concentration Pathways (RCPs) previously employed by the IPCC in that

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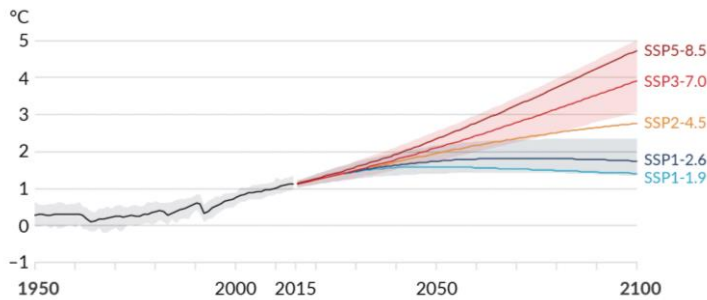


Figure 3. Global temperature projections to 2100 relative to the 1850-1900 average. (IPCC 2021).

they include characterization of the human behavior that leads to specific projected atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations. The SSP5-8.5 pathway incorporates a: “push for economic and social development ... coupled with the exploitation of abundant fossil fuel resources and the adoption of resource and energy intensive lifestyles around the world.” Effectively this seems to echo the RCP8.5 projections employed in the previous IPCC report and is the trajectory we are currently following globally. This scenario would likely result in global temperatures in the range of 3 to 5.1°C (5.4 to 9.18°F) above pre-industrial revolution temperatures by 2100 (Figure 3).

Meanwhile, projections further into the future have been provided by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in terms of RCP scenarios (Figure 4) The RCP 2.6 scenario assumes we rapidly eliminate emissions, whereas RCP 8.5 assumes we follow the current

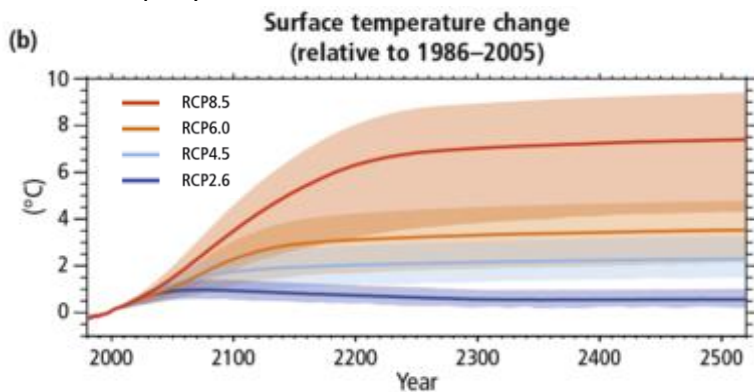


Figure 4. Long term global temperature trends according to RCP values. (Jones 2017).

trajectory of accelerating emissions. RCP 6.0 and 4.5 assume intermediate trajectories of emissions between the extremes. Note that only the RCP2.6 scenario results in a long-term global temperature increase below 2°C above pre-industrial conditions - the upper target for the 2015 Paris Agreement. Because the actual temperature trajectory we have experienced follows the RCP 8.5 scenario this has been dubbed the Business-As-Usual (BAU) scenario; we have yet to undertake sufficient actions globally to slow this trend.

Meanwhile, temperature projections for this century in Oregon (Fleishman 2023, Figure 5) suggest a similar range of temperature increases possibly reaching over 13°F above the 1970-1999 average by the end of the century under the BAU scenario (RCP 8.5).

Whether we consider the global or Oregon future, the higher range of temperature increase would be unmanageable. It would devastate natural systems (see below:) and simultaneously

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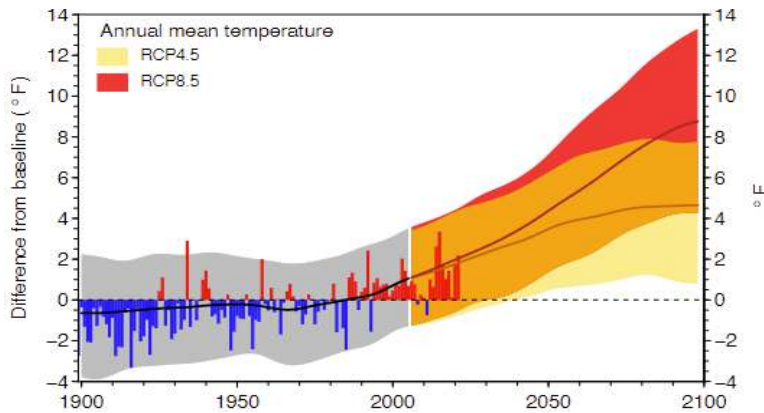


Figure 5. Oregon temperature history and projections through the century; baseline: 1970 – 1999 (Fleishman 2023).

threaten our climate dependent agricultural, ranching, and forestry activities. Bark beetle and other pest destruction of forests would likely increase as warmer temperatures enhance insect growth and development rates and enable larger overwintering populations. Similarly, invasion of natural and

agricultural systems by drought tolerant invasive species and pests will likely be enhanced.

Regional Precipitation:

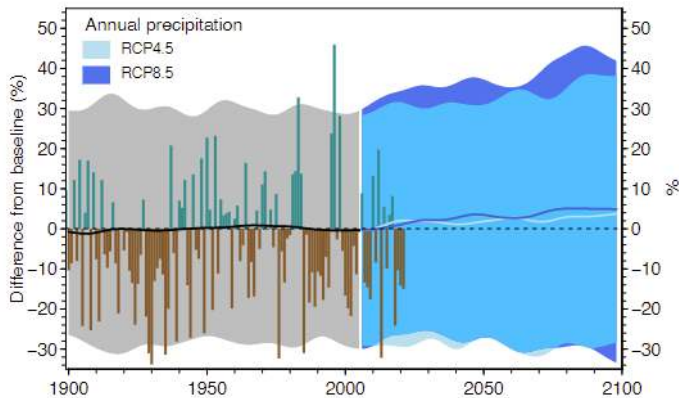


Figure 6. History and projections for precipitation statewide. (Fleishman 2023).

Annual precipitation is expected to increase very slightly (if at all) in Oregon through the balance of this century (Figure 6). However, the 2018 US Climate Change Assessment Report (Easterling *et al.* 2017) provides projections for seasonal late century precipitation patterns (Figure 7) according to the ‘business as usual’ RCP 8.5 scenario.

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The region generally is expected to exhibit fall and spring seasons that are little different from historical patterns, with winters possibly a little wetter. Notably, however, accentuating the Mediterranean 'winter wet - summer dry' climate, winters will be wetter, and summers will likely be drier.

This Mediterranean climate exists in just 6 locations across the globe (IUCN undated) and leads to soils and vegetation drying out during summers such that vegetation tends to be fire prone, fire adapted and fire dependent (Safford *et al.* 2021).

Evaporation caused by Increasing temperature will likely counter any increase in precipitation such that drought conditions continue. Water resources, already severely compromised in many locations, will become more threatened as snowpack continues to decline. Meanwhile, the current trend of precipitation occurring more frequently as severe storms rather than the light drizzle that replenishes soil moisture will continue. This will likely increase the risk of floods, soil erosion and landslides.

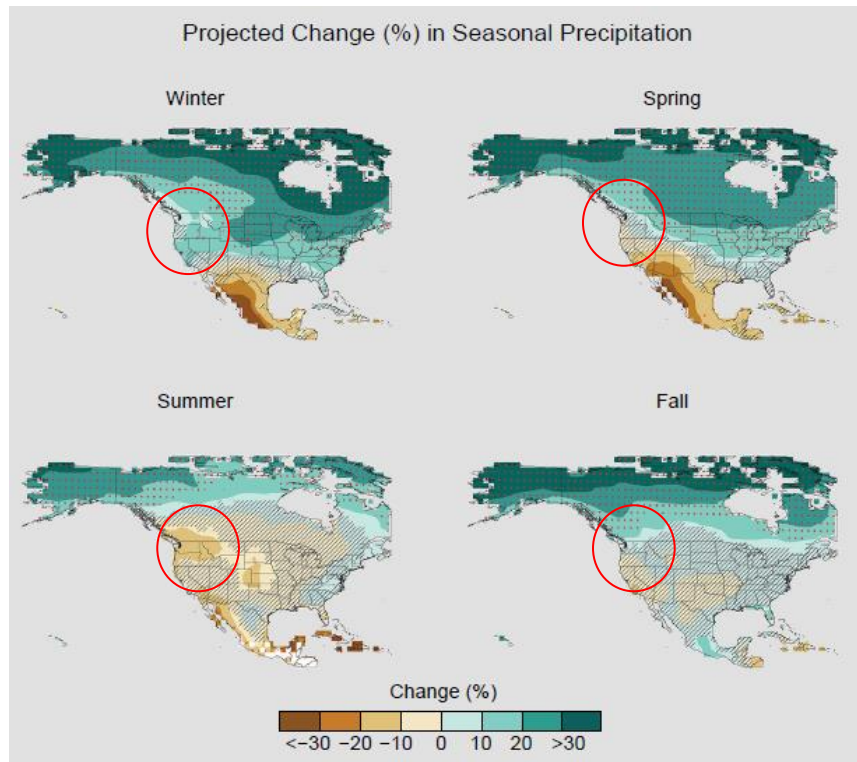


Figure 7. Projected change in precipitation to 2077-2090 compared to 1960-2005 average; stippled areas indicate large change compared to natural variation; hatched areas small change. (Easterling *et al.* 2017).

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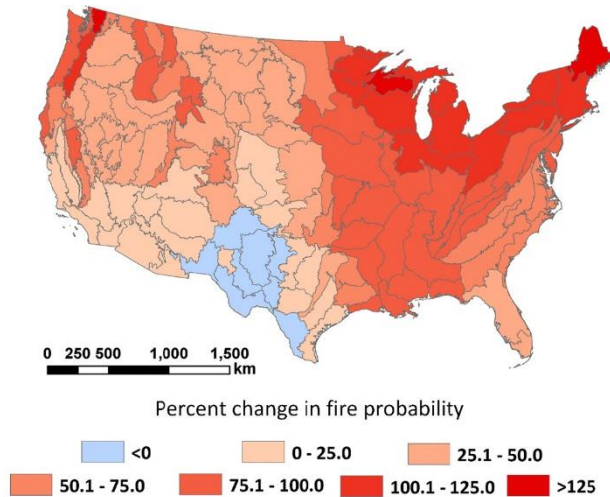


Figure 8. Potential increase in fire risk from the 1971-2000 baseline across the U.S. assuming the RCP 8.5 scenario. (Gao *et al.* 2021).

Stream and river flow occurring during summer/fall will decline and become warmer compromising many iconic Pacific Northwest cold-water aquatic species. Meanwhile, peak river flow will continue to advance earlier in the year, even reaching late fall of the previous year.

Gao *et al.* (2021) depicted the increasing risk of fire across the nation (Figure 8) under the RCP 8.5 scenario indicating that this would likely lead to increased fire probability throughout most of Oregon of at least 50%.

Several years ago, the national climate assessment, (Melillo *et al.* 2014) reported the impact of increasing temperature of just 2.2°F on area burned from wildfire, a condition potentially arriving by mid-century (Figure 9). The range in increase is from 100% meaning a doubling of the area burned to 700% meaning 8-times the current area.

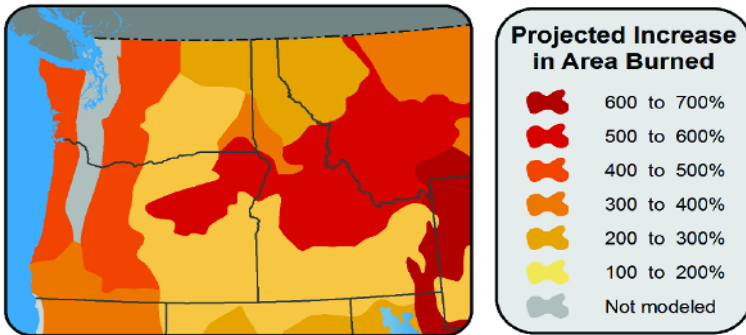


Figure 9. Anticipated wildfire consequences of a 2.2°F warming in area burned (Melillo *et al.* 2014).

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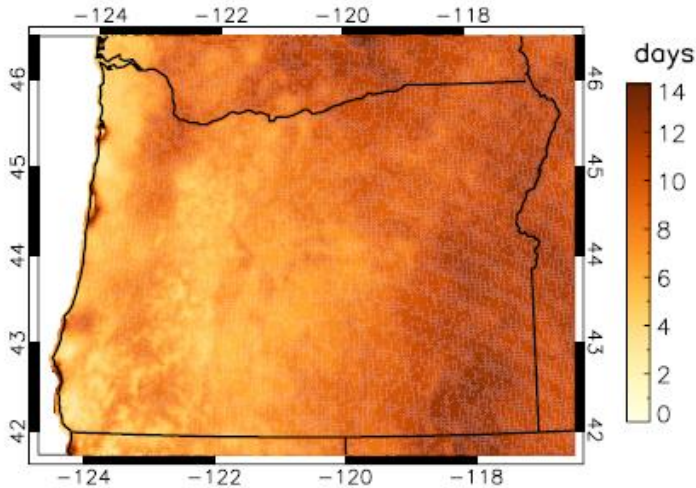


Figure 10. Increase in number of days experiencing high fire risk by mid- century (2040 - 2069) compared to the end of the last century (1971-2000). (Mote *et al.* 2019).

Mote *et al.* (2019) presented a summary of the potential increase in extreme fire risk days by mid-century (2040 - 2069) compared to historical conditions (1971 - 2000) where an increase of up to 14 days in the SE corner of the state is expected (Figure 10).

The fire season, already extended by 105 days since 1970s (Kenward *et al.* 2016), will likely become longer and more severe in Oregon. Even though our natural ecosystems have evolved with fire and are thus fire prone, fire

adapted, and fire dependent, future trends may pose a serious threat to ecosystem ongoing health. In addition, of course, both human safety and human health will likely be threatened. It was recognized long ago (Westerling *et al.* 2006) that warming and early spring snowmelt correlate with increasing fire risk.

Natural System Consequences

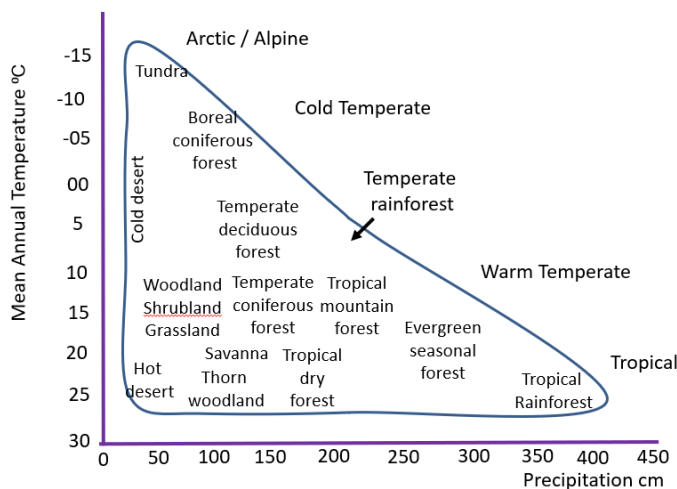


Figure 11. Global distribution of natural ecological systems (biomes) in relation to mean annual temperature and precipitation patterns. (Modified from Whittaker 1975).

That the geographic distribution of our natural ecological systems (biomes) is largely determined by the variables of temperature and precipitation (water availability) has been understood for decades. Community ecologist Robert Whittaker (1975) developed a classic chart indicating this relationship (modified in Figure 11). The chart depicts the climatic conditions that allow each of the designated biomes to exist. The critical message is that even a small shift in either of these variables from current conditions may threaten the viability of the biomes and the

species of which they are comprised. This will be especially true for biomes currently existing at the edge of the climatic range that they require. It is especially worth comparing these temperature ranges to the potential shifts in Oregon's temperature through the century (Figure

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5) from which it is evident that most of our state's precious natural systems will be threatened, and some (especially high-altitude cool climate systems) will likely be eliminated under future conditions. It is worth noting, also, that the same variables control our agricultural productivity, and clearly, our forest viability. Thus, climatic shifts of the dimensions anticipated, absent any adjustment in our collective behavior that thwarts that trajectory, will likely compromise agriculture and forestry throughout the state. Indeed, Dalton *et al.* (2017) indicate not only that "different trees have varying degrees of sensitivity to climate change and adaptive capacity." but also that "suitable climates for many important tree species and vegetation types may change considerably by the end of the 21st century...." Climate envelope projections (Rehfeldt and Crookston 2023), which assess the optimal conditions for tree species on the basis of their current and recent historic range and map these condition into the future, suggest that under the RCP 8.5 scenario, several species will likely suffer range reduction: Douglas fir, Western hemlock, Ponderosa pine, Grand fir, Western larch, Sugar pine, White fir, Pacific madrone, Western juniper, Western redcedar, Tanoak, and California laurel. Meanwhile, by the end of the century, the following species will likely find the Oregon climate completely outside their range (i.e., they will be extirpated from the state): Sitka spruce, Engelmann spruce, Lodgepole pine, Subalpine fir, and Jeffrey pine. Oregonians dependent on commercial timber harvest should be the first to demand climate action in the state.

Coastal Concerns:

Though much of Oregon is land-locked, and will suffer little directly because of ocean consequences, coastal regions and economies will have to contend with warming oceans, sea level rise, and increasing ocean acidification.

Warming Oceans. Although there is considerable seasonal fluctuation in ocean temperature, warming of oceans in the Northwest are already documented with a reported and anticipated increase at the rate of 0.35°C per decade (Alexander *et al.* 2018) off the coast of Oregon over the period 1976 - 2099. Besides influencing species directly, temperature changes impact such events as algal blooms and shellfish poisoning.

Sea Level Rise. Sea levels are rising and will continue to rise for two reasons: First, water expands as it warms from 4°C (approximately 37°F). Thus, as the ocean warms, it inevitably expands, and sea level inevitably rises. Second, as land borne ice enters the ocean, whether as water or ice, it increases the volume of the ocean. Both these phenomena have already caused sea level to rise and are expected to continue this impact. The impact is influenced by the pattern of land adjustment: if land is rising, the impact is reduced, whereas subsiding coastal land will exacerbate the impact. This complication is particularly relevant to the impact of the Cascadia Subduction Zone (CSZ) where a rising or falling land tectonic plate will influence apparent and locally detected sea level rise along the coast. The impact of the oceanic Juan de

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Fuca plate sliding under the continental North American plate is a rising continental plate (Lieberman 2012) apparently confounding the ability of a land-based gauge to detect sea level rise. However, should the earthquake occur, there will likely result a drop in the land level of a meter (3 feet) or so. Mote *et al* (2019), however, indicate that by century's end, the actual sea level rise off the coast of Oregon could plausibly reach 8 feet, a value reiterated in Fleishman (2023). During storm surges, a higher sea level will generate conditions that promote far greater storm damage and flooding than would otherwise have been the case. The impact of Hurricane Sandy in 2012 was a perfect illustration of this problem. Not long ago, the suggestion that New York subways could be flooded by a coastal storm would not have been taken seriously – yet it happened! Results of ocean rise, such as increased erosion and compromised coastal habitat integrity for tidal flat, estuary, and marsh natural communities, could become serious.

Ocean Chemistry. Serious as direct climatic consequences are, they do not constitute the sum total of the impacts of our emitting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Because carbon dioxide is absorbed by our oceans, and is transformed into carbonic acid, oceans are becoming more acidic. This is detrimental for marine organisms with carbonate-based shells since either they are unable to form shells in acidic conditions, or they lose shells already established. Bednarsek, *et al.* (2020) demonstrated that ocean acidification off the coast of Oregon is already having a negative effect on Dungeness crab (*Metacarcinus magister*) shell formation and durability. Dungeness crab is one of the most valuable species on the Oregon coast, and the further acidification of our coastal waters could be catastrophic for this population. The losses to the Northwest coast oyster industry, where larvae lose their capacity to form shells, is costing hundreds of thousands of dollars (Ben Achur 2022). Additionally, acidosis, a build-up of acidic conditions in the tissues, threatens many marine life forms.

In addition, warming oceans exhibit reduced oxygen levels, potentially critical for marine animals since, like terrestrial animals, they rely on oxygen for basic metabolic respiration.

These consequences of increasing atmospheric greenhouse gases (notably carbon dioxide) pose threats to marine life, and thus to our fisheries, coastal economies, recreation, and tourism.

Rural vs Urban Oregon:

Rural communities are typically characterized by local economies and livelihoods that are reliant on direct interactions with the environment through agriculture, timber, fishing or outdoor based tourism activities. Urban communities, by contrast are typically characterized by local economies and livelihoods that are reliant on activities that do not include direct interactions with the environment. The result is that climate change has a far greater direct

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effect on rural communities than urban areas, including the direct effects of reduced snowpack, decreased river levels, rising seas, altered growing seasons, extended drought, increasingly hot summers, and increased wildfire risk. This has led to the misconception that urban communities are not vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

While rural communities are on the frontlines of the climate crisis and are among the most vulnerable communities across Oregon, urban areas are also vulnerable. The heat related deaths in the Portland-metro area in the summer of 2020 and the Labor Day fires later that year demonstrate that urban areas are under direct threat from the impacts of climate change. Beyond the direct impacts of climate change, urban areas rely on healthy rural regions for their water supply, and their agricultural and forestry products as well as the recreational opportunities they provide through wild and less developed areas. Indirect effects, therefore, can be substantial. Climatic events that compromise natural systems, and thus urban watersheds, and regional agriculture and forestry will also have a profound impact on life in the urban centers. This impact will not be limited to impacts on prices of food and wood products but will also compromise regional recreational opportunities. Additionally, because the Pacific Northwest is projected to suffer less than most of the country from the warming climate, the region will become the target for climate refugees from across the U.S. These migrants will increase our population and place a greater burden on our natural resources and dwindling water supplies.

The 9th Oregon Senate District Climate History and Projections

This district incorporates parts of Clackamas, Linn and Marion Counties. We use Marion as the exemplar.

Temperature history and projections for Marion County are presented in Figure 12. Red represents the business as usual scenario of increasing fossil fuel use while the blue line assumes some reduction in that trajectory. According to the former scenario, Marion County will likely exhibit nearly a 9-degree F increase from the 1981-2010 average temperatures.

The precipitation trend and projection for Marion County are depicted in Figure 13 where the average remains generally flat but greater variability is seen through the century. This indicates more severe dry and wet years.

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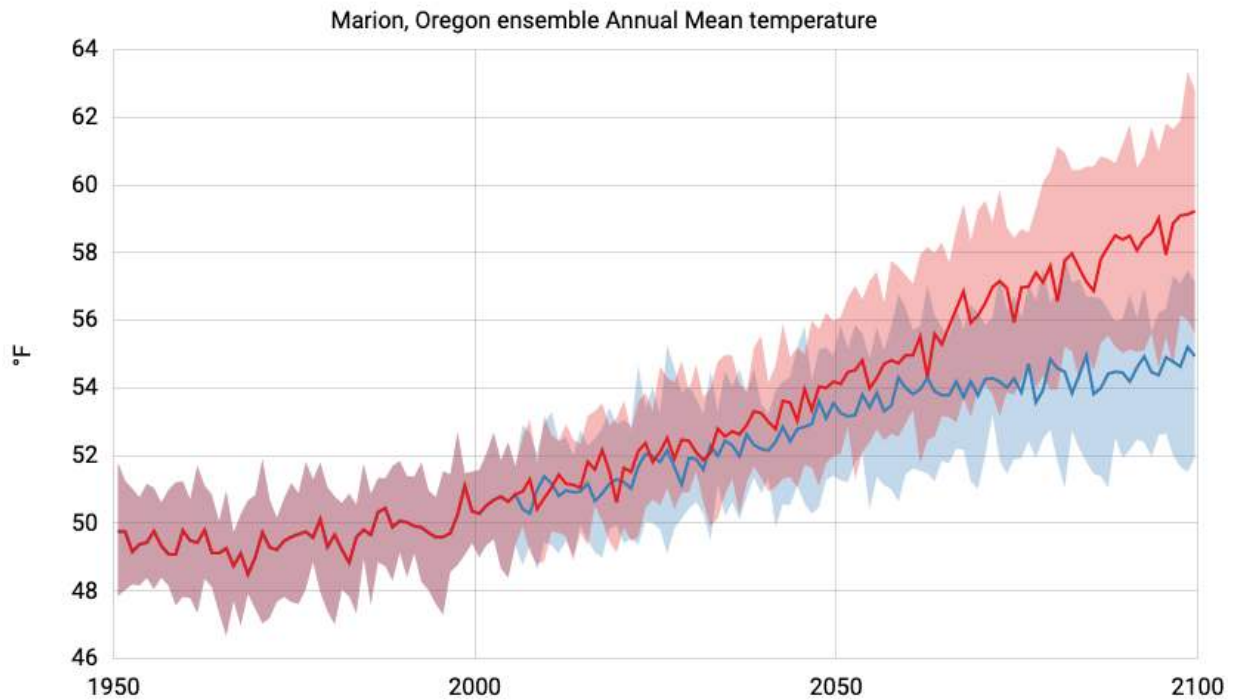


Figure 12. Temperature trends for Marion County, Oregon (USGS 2021).

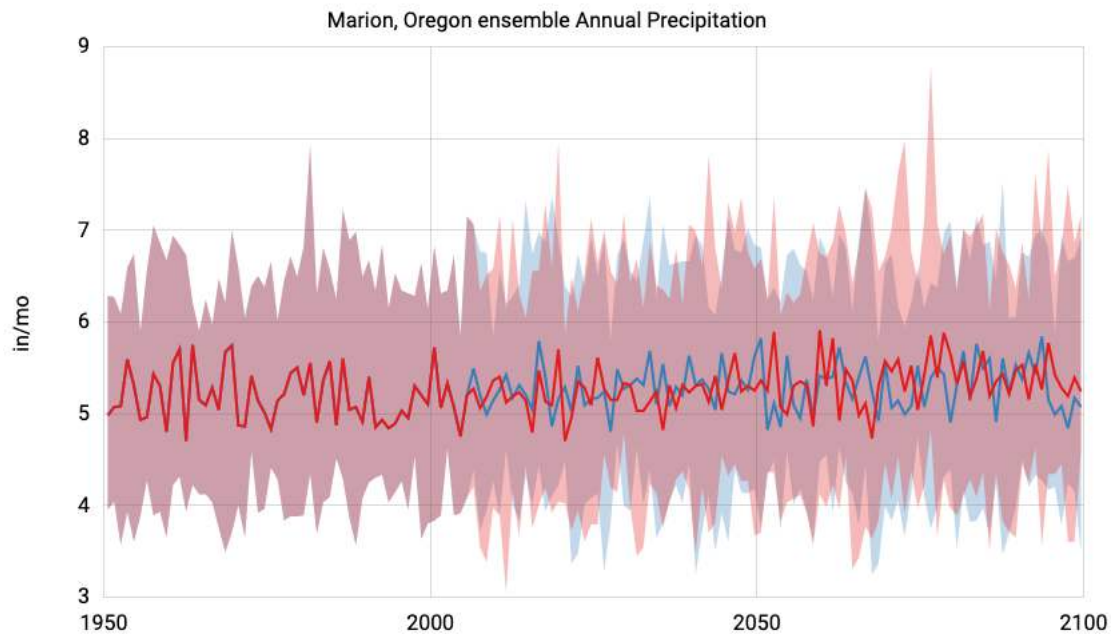


Figure 13. Historical and future projections of precipitation for Marion County. Linn and Clackamas Counties exhibit similar trends. (USGS 2021).

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Snowfall and consequent snowpack accumulation have been declining for decades in Marion County and will continue to do so at an alarming rate, as seen in Figure 14 regardless of emissions scenario (business as usual – red; emissions reduction – blue). Trends in the other counties of District 9 exhibited parallel patterns.

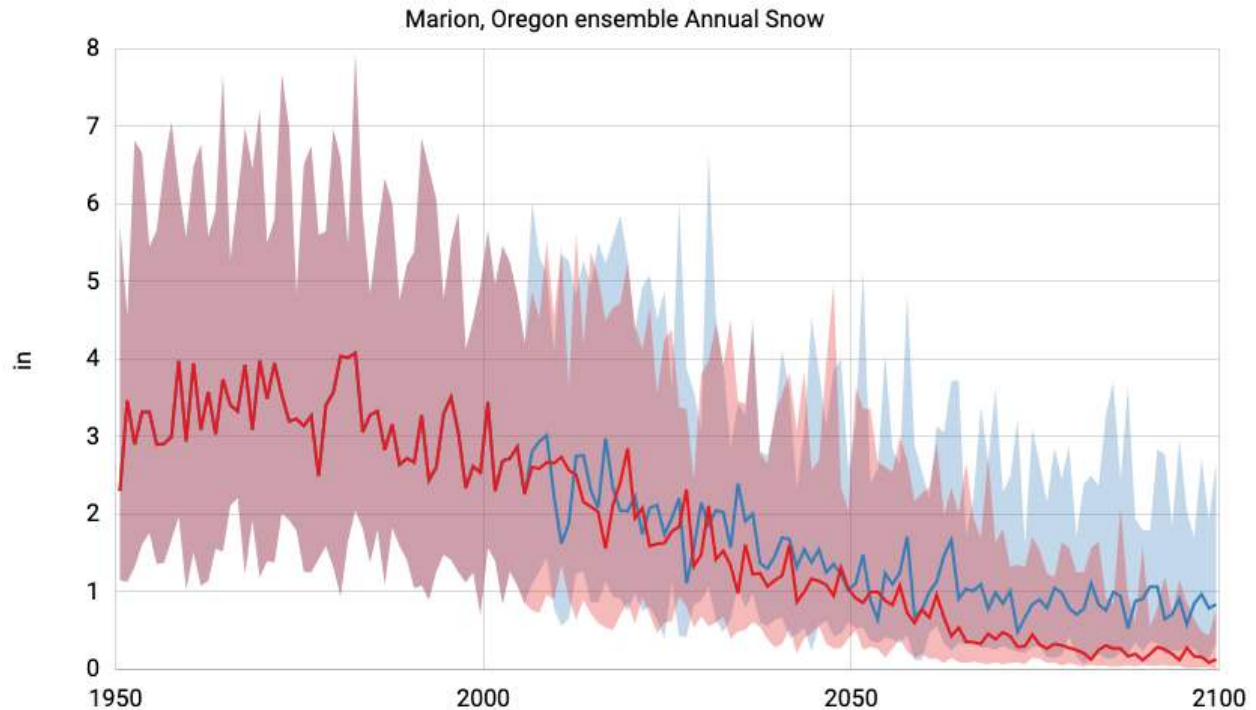


Figure 14. Marion County historic annual average snowpack in inches is presented in black with projections in blue and red. The projections are based on greenhouse gas concentration trajectories; blue assumes some redress in emissions while red assumes continued business as usual (USGS 2021).

Federal Congressional District Historical Temperature Trend

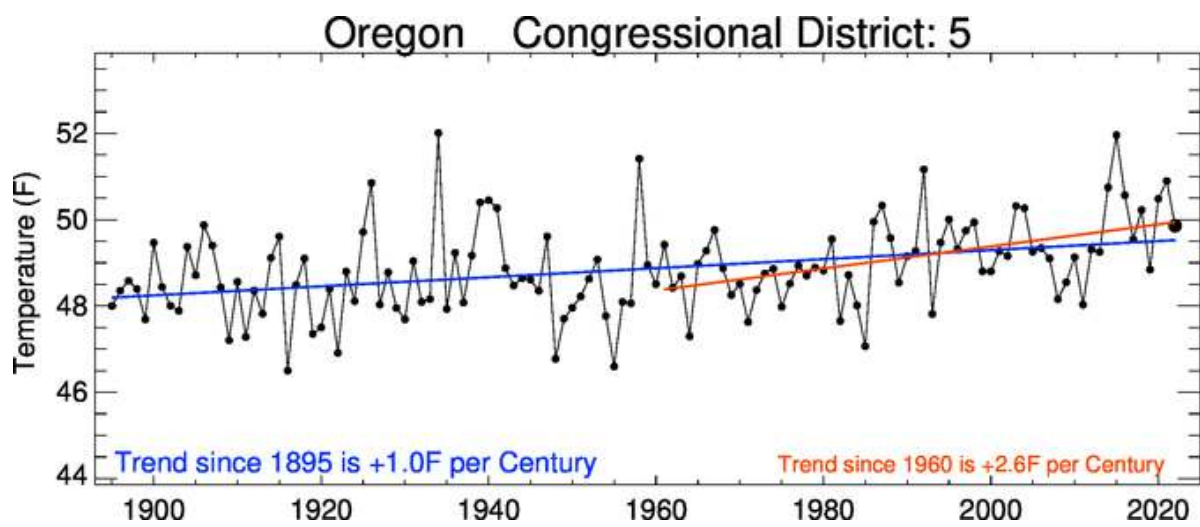


Figure 15. Temperature trend for Federal Congressional District 5 (CCT 2021).

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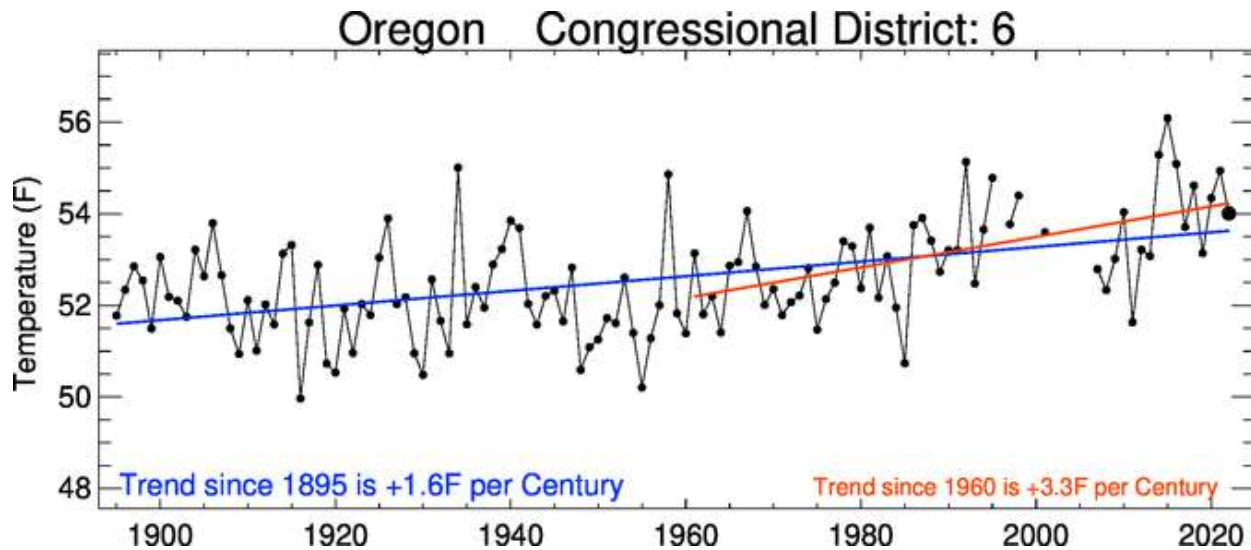


Figure 16. Temperature trend for Federal Congressional District 6 (CCT 2021).

The 9th Senate District is located within Oregon's Federal Congressional Districts 5 and 6. The data indicate that the 5th Congressional District has been warming at a rate of 2.6°F per century since 1960, while CD6 has been warming at a rate of 3.3°F per century during that same time (Figures 15 & 16).

Oregon's 9th Senate District Economy

The local economy of Senate District 9 is made up of agriculture, healthcare, manufacturing and forestry. Agriculture will likely suffer considerably due to climate change. Decreasing supplies of water for irrigation, increasing incidence of pests and disease attacks, and growing competition from weeds threaten local agriculture.

According to Marion County (2015) lumber is one of the principal industries in that county. Projections for the future viability of commercial species should represent a warning to this industry.

Although timber/lumber production has declined it is still a significant component of this district's economy. The most important commercial tree species in District 9 are Douglas fir and Western hemlock with Douglas fir making up about 75%-80% of timber sales and Western hemlock about 15%. The projected viability of these species through this century (Figures 17 & 18) indicates a likely reduced range for both species (high tree viability is indicated in red, low viability in green and absence in areas without color).

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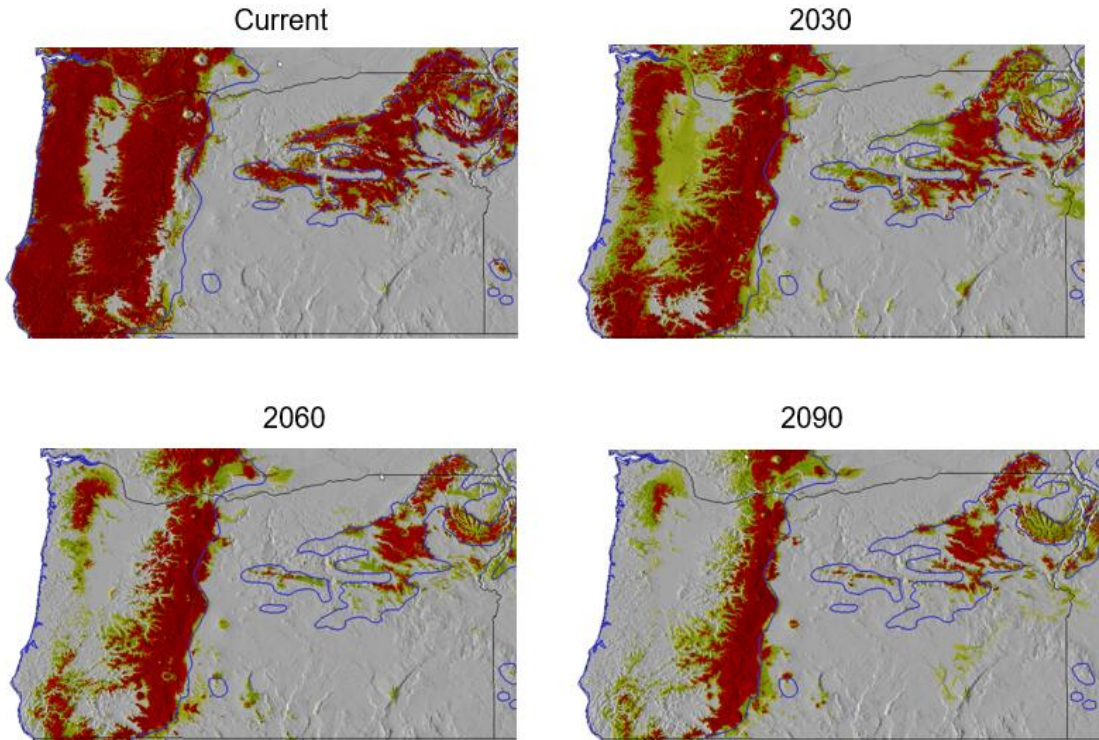


Figure 17. Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menzeisii*) current and projected distribution through the 21st Century (Crookston N, Radtke P. 2023).

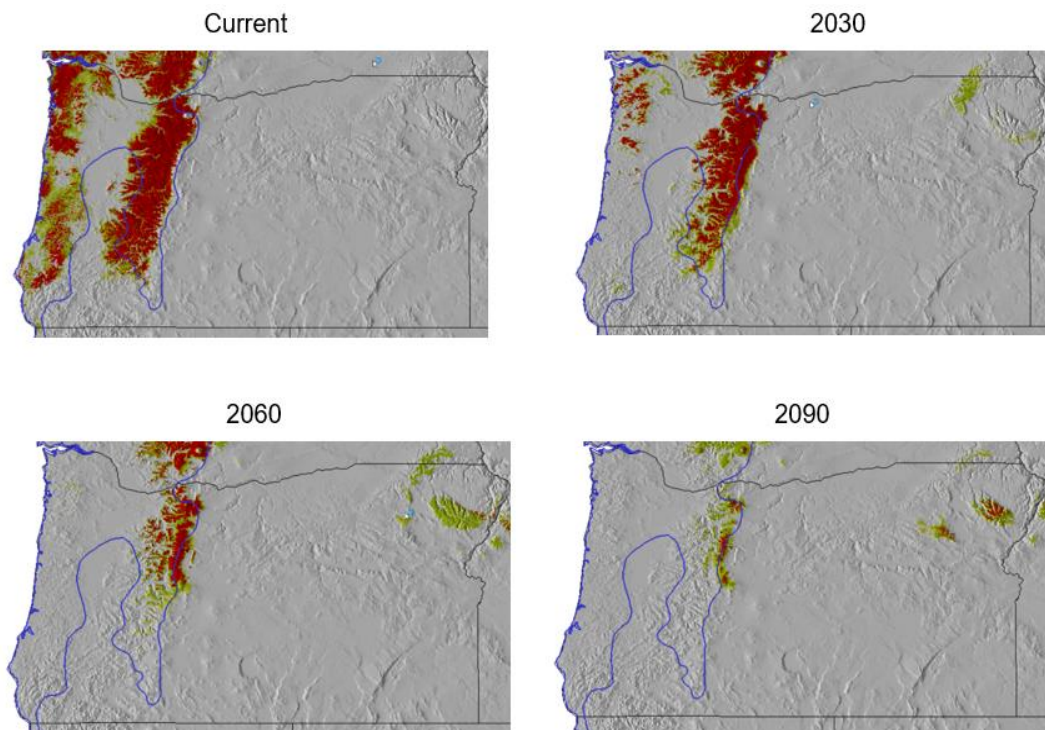


Figure 18. Western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) current and projected distribution through the 21st Century (Crookston N, Radtke P. 2023).

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Since lumber and wood products are one of the top two employer is the county (Marion undated), the projections for critical timber species should be of importance. These projections suggest conditions for these species may be less favorable than currently- meaning the forests and timber industry of the district could be severely challenged as the century unfolds, especially if we do nothing to mitigate the climate trends already evident.

Furthermore, given the ability of many Oregon forests to store carbon (Hudiburg *et al.* 2009; Law *et al.* 2018), it is critical that climatic conditions not diverge such that these important species are compromised. Halofsky *et al.* (2016) discuss the potential and disturbing impacts of climate change of SW Oregon's forests.

Potential Agricultural Impacts:

According to Census (2017) Marion County was ranked first in the state in terms of the dollar value of its agricultural products, with nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod the most valuable category. Climate change will affect each of these sectors differently. Orchard-based crops will mature more rapidly in higher temperatures which will affect crop quality and timing to markets, potentially creating a conflict with historic market need. Further shifts to earlier and earlier harvests during warmer summers could both lower the quality of the fruit and shift the competitive environment in which Oregon producers must sell their crop. In addition, unlike parts of California, winter chilling requirements for orchard crops in Oregon appear still to be sufficient. In California, chilling hours during winter have declined by as much as 30% since 1950 in areas of the Central Valley to the point of making some orchard crops non- viable. However, as climates continue to change, similar winter dormancy issues could mean trouble for Oregon's perennial crops (Dello and Mote 2010). Additionally, as snowpack decreases in the Cascades, availability of irrigation water could become more restricted as summer heat waves and droughts become more commonplace. The most consistent changes in global climate models show regional warming and drying in the summer. The multi-model average decrease for summer precipitation is 14% by the 2080s. As a result of water use "an estimated 130 kilometers [80 miles] of 2nd to 4th order streams to go dry in a moderately dry summer (EPA 2002). For a 1.8°F rise in temperature, irrigation demands are projected to increase by 10% (Dello and Mote, 2010).

Field crops are planted in soil and climatic conditions to which they are well adapted. This means adjustments from current climate can be detrimental. The agricultural 'one degree problem' occurs because increasing temperature generally reduces crop yield, in fact for each degree C temperature rise crop yield drops some 5 - 10% (Brown 2006). Meanwhile, the 'business as usual' scenario of increasing greenhouse gas emissions suggests that throughout Oregon the temperature will likely increase 5 or more degrees C with decreasing soil moisture

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(USGS 2021) posing a great risk of extended drought. Farmers and home gardeners in Oregon should be concerned about a compromised future.

AVERAGE GROWING SEASON TEMPERATURES THE RANGE IN THE ABILITY TO RIPEN VARIETIES

Northern Hemisphere (Apr-Oct), Southern Hemisphere (Oct-Apr)

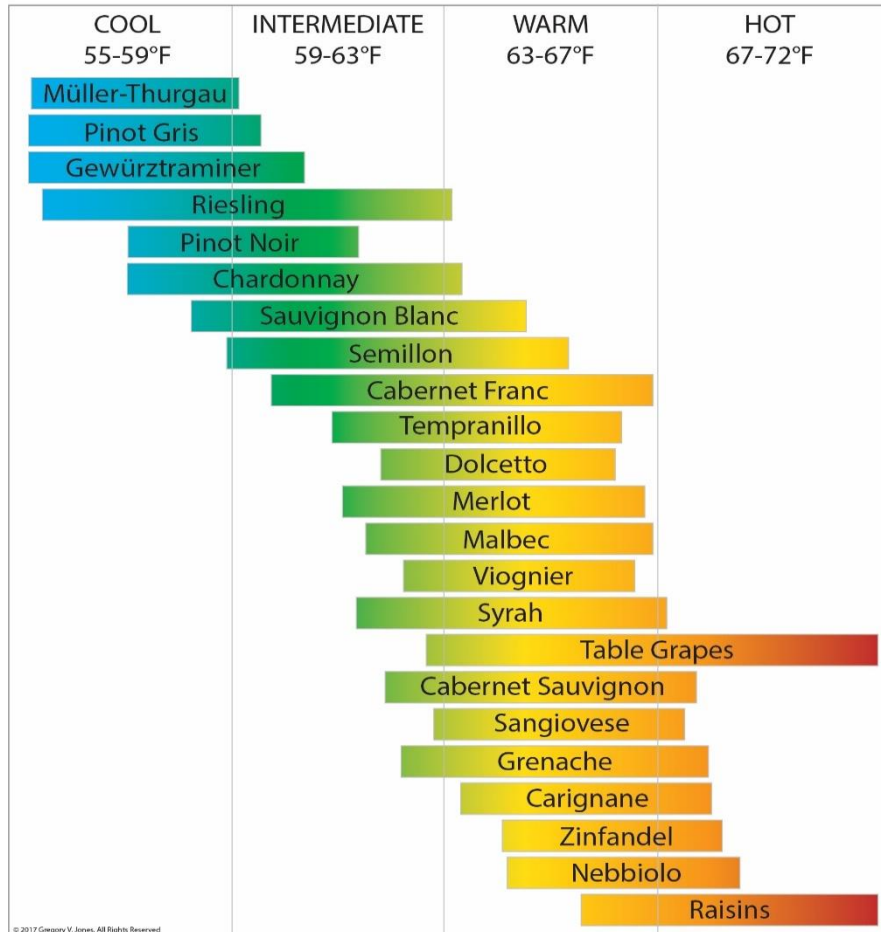


Figure 19. Grape varietal optimum growing season temperature (Jones 2015).

Wine is another economically important industry in Senate District 9. The majority of Oregon's wineries can be found here in the Willamette Valley, capitalizing on both the international fame of its Pinot Noir and the easy access to Portland. It is the coolest of Oregon's wine regions, the Willamette Valley's climate is perfectly suited to certain grape varieties that don't require intense sun and heat to ripen, typically varieties originating in Northern Europe such as Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris. The Willamette Valley is also a beacon for wine tourism in Oregon, due to its easy

access to the urban population and travel destination of Portland Oregon. The projected increase in temperatures along with longer summers and less rain would greatly alter the growing season and make it difficult to continue to grow these varieties of grapes. Figure 19 depicts the optimal temperatures for varietals grown in the region including the impact climate change will have on wine growing. Wineries will likely have to turn to warmer season grapes to stay in business.

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Oregon's 9th Senate District Recreation

Outdoor recreation, a popular pastime in District 9, is extremely dependent on the natural resource base and the weather. Nearby Mount Hood, the only year-round ski resort in the United States, is a major attraction for recreation and tourism. The projected decrease in snow cover seen in Figure 14 along with a shorter winter season could potentially hurt business. The mountain and its rivers and forests offer outdoor recreation activities, from skiing and rafting to fishing and camping. A longer summer poses a threat to winter activities such as cross-country and downhill skiing, snow shoeing, skating, ice fishing, etc. Climate change will also affect summer recreation activities. Fish populations may dwindle due to a decrease in stream flow and warmer temperatures. Camping, hiking and rafting may become more difficult due to forest fires and smoke, increased temperatures and low stream flow. Rapid climate change could mean that many plant and animal species are unable to adapt and may be extirpated. Hunters and wildlife enthusiasts will more than likely follow the wildlife north or learn to hunt and view other forms of wildlife that move into the areas that they themselves usually frequent. The indirect effects of this include the loss of tourism revenues to local restaurants, hotels and other forms of amusement as well as the loss of jobs for people within the community.

Potential Health Risk:

According to the Oregon Health Authority (2014), the main climate impacts to health are likely to be: heat, allergens, storms, and floods. The top health concerns will be: poor air quality, respiratory illness, heat-related illness, harmful algal blooms, recreational hazards, increased allergens, displacement, landslides, economic instability, and mental health impacts. Communities that will be especially vulnerable will be: low-income households and neighborhoods, communities of color, older adults, people living on steep slopes, people working in agriculture, first responders, Native Americans, young children, and pregnant women.

A Timeline for Action:

Based on the projected consequences of the warming global climate, international agreements (e.g., UNFCCC 2015) some years ago established 2°C (preferably 1.5°C) above pre-industrial conditions as the limit beyond which we should not allow the global temperature to climb. This limit was echoed by the World Bank (2014). Meanwhile, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2018a) indicated that the 2°C limit pushes us too close to many global

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tipping points beyond which recovery becomes a reducing possibility. Thus, they recommend that we absolutely should target 1.5°C if we wish a reasonable chance of retaining a livable planet. Unfortunately, underlining the urgency, emissions to date may have already committed us to the 1.5°C increase (Mauritsen and Pincus 2017).

Global greenhouse gas emissions during 2017 totaled 53.7 Gigatonnes (GT) of carbon dioxide equivalent (IPCC 2018b) which includes between 32.5 (IEA 2019) and 36.5 GT of carbon dioxide (WRI 2018). This implies that between 30% and 40% of the global warming emissions are due to gases other than carbon dioxide. The trends and consequences discussed here are based on readily available data. This underlines the urgency for immediate action across the globe to curtail greenhouse gas emissions if we wish to avoid an increase over 2°C. Considerable variability exists among estimates of the emissions budget remaining if we are to restrict warming to the 1.5°C increase targets (Levin 2018, Carbon Brief 2018). Indeed, the latter source identifies a large range in estimates for a 66% chance of keeping warming to below 1.5°C of between 28 GT and 779 GT. Meanwhile, the IPCC (2018a) indicated that the rate of carbon dioxide emissions alone is currently 42 ± 3 Gigatonnes annually suggesting that, for a 50% chance at a rise below 1.5°C, the remaining budget for emissions is 580 GT CO₂, while for a 66% chance, the remaining emissions budget is 420 GT CO₂. Considering the current accelerating rate of emissions, the IPCC (2018a) concluded that by 2030 we must impose a reduction in emissions of 45% below the 2010 level and by 2050 we must reach net zero emissions. Considering the increasing impact of greenhouse gases other than carbon dioxide, that seems both conservative and reasonable. Underlining the urgency and imperative of limiting warming to 1.5°C, long ago the World Bank (2014) acknowledged there is: “no certainty that adaptation to a 4°C world is possible.”

Representing the People at the 24th United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties in Poland (COP24), British naturalist and broadcaster Sir David Attenborough argued that in climate change “we are facing a man-made disaster of global scale, our greatest threat in thousands of years...” and “If we don't take action, the collapse of our civilizations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon.” (Domonoske 2018). The choice is ours!

From the trends and consequences discussed here, all based on readily available data, there should be little doubt that substantial urgency must be attached to addressing this issue.

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Solutions:

In addition to individual action wherein we evaluate our actions and adjust our behavior to reduce activities that result in greenhouse gas emissions or increase those that result in atmospheric greenhouse gas sequestration (capture and storage), we can promote local, state and federal actions that do the same on a larger scale. Local communities can develop Climate Action Plans that promote emissions reductions and capture/sequestration activities. Meanwhile, at the state and federal level, similar such programs can be instituted. The predominant proposals to achieve this involve either:

- a) imposing a jurisdictional cap on emissions which declines over time to establish a trajectory of emissions reductions that meet long term reductions goals. This approach involves the issuance of allowances to emit that reduce over time. Allowances may be sold/auctioned, or allocated free, or involve some combination.
- b) imposing a fee or tax on emissions that rises over time to achieve reductions that are consistent with a desired trajectory and long-term goals.

The cap approach is direct since it involves assessing emissions from target polluters and requiring that reductions occur while the tax/fee approach is indirect since it assumes that a rising tax will result in reduced emissions.

Both approaches usually involve the generation of funds either via sold/auctioned allowance in the case of the cap, or a fee in the case of the tax/fee approach. The second question associated with either approach involves a decision as to what will be done with the funds raised. One approach is to return these to residents or taxpayers (the individuals who ultimately pay the cost of the pollution reduction); hence the concept of a Dividend. Alternatively, the funds raised can be used to offset allow reductions in other taxes, whether individual or corporate. Finally, these funds may be used for investments that (a) promote activities that themselves lead to reductions in atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations, either by reducing emissions of promoting sequestration and/or (b) serve the goals of promoting environmental / social justice by assisting communities historically disadvantaged by pollution or likely to suffer disproportionately from the transition to a clean energy economy.

Since the state legislature has declined to implement a comprehensive policy, if Oregon is to contribute its share to addressing the climate crisis and wishes to appear credible when seeking action elsewhere, it will be necessary to take smaller targeted steps that reduce emissions in designated sectors or activities and/or promote the sequestration of carbon from our atmosphere in our natural and working lands.

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