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## **Global warming debate heats up in Northwest**

**By Keisha Burns, KTVZ.COM**

From the Oregon Cascades to Washington's Puget Sound, scientists believe people from every walk of life are bound to experience changes driven by global warming.

The changes are happening close to home, and according to Cylvia Hayes, executive director of 3E Strategies in Bend, that could eventually lead to winter flooding, summer water shortages, out-of-control wildfires and a loss to the fishing industry.

"So we've had die-offs of millions of fingerling salmon," she said. "Those are the ones that are not now making it back to the coast to support the salmon fishing industry."

According to experts, in 2002, we started to develop a "dead zone" off the Oregon coast, which often occurs when nutrients from runoff such as fertilizers and manure gets into major water bodies and causes oxygen depletion.

Hayes said that could hurt the fishing industry: "It's really tough on the fish population, but a lot of these guys can get out of the way. It's really tough on the crab population, which is the most profitable fishery industry in Oregon."

But a dead zone off the Oregon coast and drought in the West have experts looking at a different culprit: climate change.

Hayes said the changes are already visible.

"We've seen a 400 percent increase in catastrophic wildfires in the Western United States in the last 20 years, directly related to a changing climate and to an increased drought," she said.

That could affect lands more vulnerable to flooding once rain falls.

But some say the news isn't all bad.

That's because increasing temperatures could prevent occasional chain-ups along the passes, and also bring an early spring garden.

But Sallie Schullinger-Krause Global Warming Program director with the Oregon Environmental Council, said it's important to look at the broader economic context, rather than the immediate effects.

"We may not have to use as much heat in the winter, but then in the summer we may be faced with much higher temperatures where we have to use more electricity for air conditioners at a time," she said.

But in terms of the significances of what is happening locally, climate impact groups say the Pacific Northwest is warming faster than most other places in the world and that could lead to dire consequences.

Eric Wanless, principal of Norwest Consulting, said the consequences could affect our water supply.

"We have most of our weather coming from the snowpack and the Cascades and elsewhere," he said. "If you have a lot of global warming happening, you have less snow in the mountains, you have less water in the summer, when fish and other folks appreciate it being in there."

Which goes back to climate changes. Wanless said as temperatures continue to warm rapidly, researchers expect more of the precipitation to fall in the winter as rain, rather than snow.

"Instead of coming in the form of snow, it's coming in the form of rain, so you're not storing up that water base in the mountains," he said. "It's just running down immediately. You don't have that store of water for the summer."

Despite concerns with flooding, droughts and raging wildfires. Wanless said about a third of the global warming pollution comes from another culprit, transportation.

"So burning fossil fuel like gasoline in our cars when you burn fossil fuel, in the case of an automobile or coal or natural gas in the case of electricity for our homes, that emits global warming pollution," he said.

But here's what you can do to now, to keep the climate from getting worse. Use energy more wisely, recycle, use less heat and air conditioning and drive less.

Although in some cases the changes that occur as global warming happens will be easy to see, scientists believe others will be less obvious.

But as far as the challenge for those of us who are faced with this issue now. Hayes explains there's not a lot of time to change our way.

"Can we react quickly enough and boldly enough to be able to prevent those really big tipping point kind of changes?" she asked. "I think we have a few years' time to look at that, and it's really one of the compelling challenges of our generation."

A compelling challenge that will take a global effort, to keep the ice caps from melting away our future.