

## The Climate Change Challenge

Climate change is a big problem, one you might have heard of before but what exactly is climate change? Well, climate change is the earth rapidly heating up due to the atmosphere progressively getting thicker. Now some people will simply say it's just weather, but they couldn't be more wrong. You see weather is only temporary while climate change is permanent, and for the past 20 years the earth's average temperature has risen by about 2 degrees. Now 2 degrees doesn't sound like a lot but those 2 degrees have caused glaciers to melt and the water to expand, drastically raising the sea levels. This is mostly due to burning fossil fuels which put more CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere in fact global temperature risen significantly with 2023 being the warmest year on record and the 10 warmest years occurring in the past decade. So now you know what climate is and how it works.

Climate change can do some real big damage in the Pacific Northwest and change every aspect of life. To begin with rainfall and snowmelt have been completely altered changing the way we as people and the animals in the northwest region receive water. Forests are also feeling the affects of climate change with increasing reports of wildfires, droughts, and infestation, soon the forest will no longer be a suitable environment for many forms of life, and as climate change continues to warm our oceans, the sea levels continue to rise, along with acidifying, which will affect the fish and local wildlife. Now don't think that humans get left out of this mess because we absolutely don't. Our society is also facing many threats from climate change, with resources inflating in price and air quality getting worse and worse each year so we'd better take climate change seriously before it's too late.

Climate change is greatly affecting the forests of Washington, and all ecosystems built inside them. Due to the warmer temperature and drier conditions allowing for more extreme

natural events like, wildfires, droughts and disease have all made the forest a much less suitable environment for many species of trees which in turn will heavily reduce air quality and carbon storage, as well as the amount of clean water. This may lead to many plants and animals to suffer and species dying out. Although some forests can benefit from the added heat which can help trees grow but the warmer climate also allow for more invasive species to thrive. Human deforestation also has a big part to play in this. Every single day people buy tons of paper packaging material and construction material that are all made from wood generating about 190 million dollars a year making up a whopping 4.5% of Americas manufacturing gross domestic product and between 2010 and 2020 the net loss of forests globally has been 4.7 million hectares per year so the forests are dying due to climate change and we should try our best to try and preserve them.

After hearing about how awful climate change is, you'd probably be wondering what you can do to help and if you even can, and let me tell you that you have a choice, an option to help out and so does the government so I'm going to tell you what you can do. First you can reduce the amount of energy you use that's created by coal, oil, or gas. You could also walk, bike, use and electric care, or take public transportation to lower your carbon footprint. We can also use huge machines to suck carbon out of the atmosphere, or prepare the forests by cleaning up trash in the forest, have the government take extra care of forests prone to fire and disease and we can plant trees that are more resistant to fire so if a fire does happen the forest will be prepared. So, if we want to keep the ecosystems healthy and the forest clean then we must do something to stop this global issue that is climate change.

Now, for as long as I can remember I've always loved the forest and a faint memory from when I was little still lingers in my head one of walking along worn pebble paths among tall pines and cedar trees with my grandfather. Pointing out all the little plants and animal that catch

my eye. While little sliver of sunlight beam down from above through the little cracks between the branches and leaves. If we want to keep the planet healthy and our society together then we must find ways to help fix climate change so join us now, help us thrive, and make the world a better future.

## Sources

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