



Region to warm more, expert says

[By Diana Washington Valdez / El Paso Times](#)

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Climate-change experts say temperatures in West Texas and Southern New Mexico are expected to rise 5 to 8 degrees in the next 50 years.

"It's been pretty warm here lately, but it's going to get even warmer," said Brian Hurd, associate professor at New Mexico State University and one of the experts at Tuesday's Far West Texas Climate Change Conference in El Paso. "It's a big increase, and I believe the science for this is on strong ground."

Overall, warmer temperatures will increase the rate of water evaporation in the arid region and decrease snowpack in higher elevations.

The amount of available water in the Rio Grande, one of El Paso's major sources of drinking water, relies on snowpack in the mountains of southern Colorado and northern New Mexico.

Hurd also said climate change, coupled with increases in food prices, would require cities and farms to work more closely together than in the past.

A state law initiated by state Sen. Eliot Shapleigh, D-El Paso, mandated the water planning region that includes El Paso to conduct a climate-change conference.

"Having experts gather in El Paso on water and climate change is very important," Shapleigh said. "Every expert agrees temperatures will rise, snowpack will fall, and storms will intensify. Our job is to craft public policy to guarantee the best water outcomes."

Kevin Ward, executive administrator of the Texas Water Development Board, said the modeling used to gauge global warming's effects could not reliably predict rainfall.

"From a consumer standpoint, people should continue to practice water and energy conservation," he said.

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