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Report: Inaction on Climate Change Racks Up Huge Bill for NM and Southwest

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Santa Fe, NM - New Mexico and other Southwestern states are racking up huge expenses as a result of the nation's lack of action to mitigate climate change. Of special concern are water resources and energy costs, according to a new report from the *Natural Resources Defense Council*, which comes just as the state gears up for the peak of a wildfire season that already is off to an early start.

Ann Watkins, special assistant to the State Engineer, says despite an unusually wet winter, more fires are just the beginning.

"We have a number of smaller water systems which will be really impacted. Ecosystem issues are going to be just tremendous, and we've already seen forest fires."

The report predicts the environmental impact of global warming on the nation's water resources could total nearly a trillion dollars, with much of the cost concentrated in the Southwest and Southeast. Watkins says the changing climate will also cost the state a bundle for more energy to power cooling systems.

[Consuelo Bokum, New Mexico Water Project director for 1000 Friends of New Mexico, says](#) the state is already experiencing more than its share of water woes.

"Even without climate change, the West and New Mexico in particular is facing problems associated with water availability and water scarcity. As climate change accelerates, those problems are only going to increase drastically."

The report points out that climate change also will hurt agriculture. In Bokum's opinion, action must be taken now to reduce global warming pollution, in order to avoid the serious financial and social consequences outlined in the report.

Eric Mack/Don Mathisen, Public News Service - NM

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