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Warming may be cause of flooding

■ **CLIMATE:** *UO professor says the wet weather could be attributed to a predicted global temperature increase*

The Associated Press

Climate specialists from the University and Stanford University say global warming may have something to do with Oregon's sopping-wet weather.

The Pacific Northwest's relentless barrage of floods and its record rainfall last year are "not inconsistent" with the global warming effects predicted by numerous climate studies, said University Geography Professor Patrick Bartlein.

"These are features that kind of show up in one climate simulation after another," he said.

"Even though it is hard to believe, precipitation is limited by temperature, not by the availability of moisture," he said. "As it gets warmer in winter, the hydrologic cycle will be getting more vigorous. And the last two winters here have been very warm."

Stanford University climatologist Stephen Schneider said scientists are 99 percent certain that the Earth has warmed one degree Fahrenheit in the past century.

"The sea level is higher, the oceans have gone up and the main mountain glaciers have receded in the 20th century," he said.

To conclusively attribute those changes to humans requires more scientific data, Schneider and Bartlein said.

Other scientists are skeptical.

State climatologist George Taylor theorizes that Oregon sits on the threshold of a 20-year, cold-wet cycle after going through re-



MATHEW STIFFLER/Emerald

This year's record rain fall made it necessary for people living near streams to protect their houses from the water.

peated natural warm-dry and cold-wet cycles of that duration in the past.

He subscribes to a "conveyor belt" theory of global-scale currents. Currents sometimes cool this continent by carrying tropical Pacific Ocean water through the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean. The warm water encounters cold water traveling north in the Atlantic, and the warm water cools, sinks and eventually reverses direction. This sets up a subsurface countercurrent that takes the cool water back to the Indian and Pacific oceans.

Other times these currents are virtually still, allowing the warm weather to stay in the Pacific.

"In the early '70s, I was in grad school, and the real talk was of a global ice age," Taylor said. "Of course, it all changed in the and

now they are saying, 'oh, the ice caps will melt and global warming will be out of control.'

"Let me hasten to point out that I believe human activities will influence global climate, but I also believe that there is a natural [fluctuation] to global temperatures."

David Greenland, another University geography professor, said scientists need 20 years of data showing unusual weather patterns to pin them to global climate change.

"Each year you throw the dice, you get a temperature and precipitation value," said Bartlein.

"Some years you get warm and dry, some years you get warm and wet, cold and dry and cold and wet. What global climate change is doing is increasing the number of warm and wet faces on the dice."

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