

NORMAL ...

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Warmer temperatures will more quickly dry the landscape. As the region becomes hotter and drier, stream levels in summers will decrease and water temperatures will increase. With longer and much hotter summer seasons, soil moisture decreases, trees become stressed, and vegetation will dry out. A future of bigger, hotter, longer-lasting fires is likely.

"Climate change generally will reduce tree growth and make forests more susceptible to insects and fire. This is especially true at drier sites and lower elevations. Forest types could change completely, for example, from conifers to hardwoods, or even to scrublands and grasslands. ... and a variety of species, from trees to wildflowers, from big predators to insects will shift in composition, seasonal timing, and range."

And while some weather changes are



Darlingtonia californica

already happening, the good news is that the Klamath-Siskiyou (KS) "is better positioned to fend off climate impacts than many regions in the West," and "is especially well-suited to maintaining biodiversity under such pressures, because of the diverse topography, microclimates, and habitats available to species in this area."

However the report also says "old-growth and mature forest (about 80 years old or older) is the most important over-arching climate refuge, and cautions that only 28 percent of this forest type remains in the KS and that "proposed solutions must be taken seriously now, before it is

too late."

Some species are more vulnerable to climate change than others. Particularly high elevation species that can't shift upslope - they've run out of real estate. Also, hotter, drier conditions at all elevations mean that wet and cold-loving species frequently won't find spots to survive in and this could lead to local disappearance of many species and possible extinctions. "Certain rare plants, amphibians, and perhaps most tragically, that most iconic of species, salmon," are most vulnerable.

One local scientist, John Roth, who has served as Chief of Resource Management at Oregon Caves National Monument for many years, is involved in climate science projects to gain precise insights about weather conditions - with the goal of helping other agency land managers make the right decisions.

Roth is currently writing the Paleo-Climatic chapter for the Rogue Siskiyou National Forest's Climate Vulnerability Assessment. In this work he's examining both stalactites found in caves and sediment cores from Bolan Lake.

"When you do paleo-climate reconstructions that go back hundreds to thousands of years, it's important to utilize combined data from across disciplines to make much more accurate predictions on a local and regional basis," he said. "And right now, too much climate science relies on generalized predictions."

Roth also worries that "we could lose all of our sub-alpine habitat." But he said, "If we can save the Mountain Beaver (the Aplodontia) who eats conifer seedlings, that loss may be staved off. Then we may be able to save the sub-alpine habitat. That's just one local example.

"It's like Aldo Leopold wrote in his famous book, 'Sand County Almanac,'" Roth said. "It all comes down to the first rule of intelligent tinkering, which is to save all the parts."

Thus protection of climate strongholds, refuges and vulnerable landscapes are critical. But the report concludes that reducing non-climate impacts is also essential:

"Key examples of impacts to prevent

include habitat fragmentation, erosion from roads, loss of keystone species, introduction of invasive species, livestock over-allocation, floodplain and coastal development, over allocation of water, inappropriate fire management, and post-fire logging."

"It knocks the air right out of my body, to think about how we have done

so much damage to our wild places," said Terry Bremmer, a retired art teacher who enjoys painting the region's birds and flowers. "I know we'll never wind back the clock on all the sins of society, but if there's steps we can take now, well, we owe that to future generations to try and preserve as much as we can."



(File photo, Illinois Valley News)

The Biscuit Fire taken from the 8 Dollar Bridge in August of 2002.

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