

# The Climate and Sports

- Ryan Callori

The winter sports industry is a huge part of American culture, especially in the Northeast. Generating close to 12.2 billion dollars annually and serving as the livelihood of many, the business of snow is an important one. Rising temperatures and decreased snowfall are beginning to pose a serious threat to both casual skiers and resort workers alike. More and more winters are gathering less and less snowfall, causing an almost 1 billion dollar decline this past decade. Along with this decline, there have been anywhere from 13,000 to 27,000 jobs lost in decreased snow seasons. These concerns are not without attention, though; groups like Protect Our Winters and the National Resources Defense Council have called upon industry leaders to help slash greenhouse gas emissions, the main cause of global warming.

Without action, snow depths in the Western U.S. could in the coming years decrease by at least 25 percent, and temperatures could rise 4-10 degrees by the end of the century. Evidence of these changes is already being seen today, with the 2012 snow sport season being one of the driest in recent history. This resulted in 50 percent of resorts opening after their originally projected date, and 48 percent of resorts closing earlier than expected. The coming warmth affects not only our Northeast, but the entire United States. Here, the average number of days with snow cover is projected to decrease by 50-70 percent with warmer temperatures. In the Cascades and Sierra Nevada mountains, the snowpack may also decrease 40-70 percent, while temperatures in Alaska may rise 8-13 degrees, which would further squash the snowy season.

Across the Southwestern U.S. and Rocky Mountains, ski resorts will be hammered by shortened seasons, decreased snowpack, and lower snow depth. The results of these effects will be immediate and serious. For example, the economic impact of low vs. high snowfall in New Hampshire was measured in the 2011 NSAA (National Ski Areas Association) Economic Analysis report. In a single New Hampshire low-snow year, skier visits were down 17 percent, ski resort revenue was down 54 million dollars, and 658 jobs were lost. Without action, we could soon be witnessing the decline of a vital part of American culture, and a valuable asset to the United States economy.