

SAN GABRIEL VALLEY TRIBUNE

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These researchers want California to be a global advocate about climate change

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Researchers from California's top universities agree with scientists across the globe that climate change is not some future threat but is already happening, causing extreme weather, record-breaking heat, mega wildfires and shifting migration patterns.

But it will take more than advocacy to translate mission statements into action, especially when these same scientists and policy makers [meet in Paris](#) later this year at a United Nations Climate Change Conference.

"Dialog is more important than advocacy. You've got to learn how to communicate outside the Ivory Tower," said Elizabeth Hadly, a global climate change scientist from Stanford University who spoke at the [California Climate Change Symposium](#) Monday in Sacramento, put on by the International Panel on Climate Change and the California Natural Resources Agency.

Hadly spoke about circulating the [Scientific Consensus Statement](#), signed by 3,440 scientists in 75 countries, from Europe to developing countries, religious leaders and even a group of "right-wing" retired U.S. military generals who concluded that climate change is a threat to national security.

California law requires reducing greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, to 1990 levels by 2020, and a further reduction of 80 percent by 2050 is planned. The state's power output has reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent since 1990, said Robert Weisenmiller, chairman of the California Energy Commission.

"We have led the way in how to address climate issues but we need to do more and we need to be reaching out," he said during the opening session of the two-day conference.

More intense wildfires and hotter temperatures have plagued the state, aggravating a [four-year drought](#). "The scientific evidence that the current severe drought we are experiencing now is influenced

by climate change is strong and growing,” said Peter Gleick, president of The Pacific Institute in the Bay Area.

Scientists said unchecked climate change in California could raise sea levels from 2 meters to 5 meters and require the relocation of Los Angeles International Airport and San Diego International Airport, said UC San Diego Professor Veerabhadran Ramanathan, an advisor to Gov. Jerry Brown on climate issues.

Scientists at the symposium said California coastal communities are particularly at risk. Global climate change and sea level rise could displace 200 million people in the United States by 2100, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

Brown has taken the Scientific Consensus Statement to other countries, signing agreements to reduce greenhouse gases with China, British Columbia and states in Mexico. The California delegation will try to move consensus into action at the UN meeting in Paris, something unachievable in the past.

The 1997 Kyoto Agreement was rejected by the U.S. Senate and President George W. Bush in 2001. Meanwhile, greenhouse gas emissions have risen from 6 billion metric tons of carbon a year in the early 1990s to about 10 billion metric tons a year in 2015.