

Study: Climate change sucks moisture from West

By Stuart Leavenworth, Sacramento Bee

The Trump administration released a sweeping report Friday that pegged man-made climate change to droughts and wildfires in California and the West, but for reasons one may not expect.

Scientists have uncovered little evidence that climate change is a driver of reduced rainfall and snowfall in the region, including during the drought of 2001-2015. But studies have found strong links that higher temperatures, caused by climate change, have reduced soil moisture in California and other states. That in turn has affected farm operations and dried out vegetation, creating fuel for wildfires.

“Much evidence is found for a human influence on surface soil moisture deficits due to increased evapotranspiration caused by higher temperatures,” said the congressionally mandated National Climate Assessment, an annual review of scientific literature on climate change affecting the United States.

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