



THE ART OF PITCHING

Finding the human element behind the data

By Rachel Ramirez

@rachelreports

theconfluence.news

HELLO! MY NAME

RACHEL RAMIREZ



@rachelreports

theconfluence.news

ABOUT ME

Rachel Ramirez is an award-winning independent climate journalist and the author of *The Confluence*, a newsletter that tells stories about the world's oceans. Recognized as *Covering Climate Now's* 2024 Journalist of the Year, she was previously the climate writer and reporter at CNN. Her work has also appeared in major outlets including *The Guardian*, *Vox*, *Grist*, and *HuffPost*.

Beyond her reporting, Ramirez co-founded the Asian American Journalists Association's Pacific Islander Task Force and serves on the advisory board for *The Uproot Project*, a network by and for climate and environmental journalists of color. Originally from the island of Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands, she is currently based in New York City.

DRAWING THE AUDIENCE

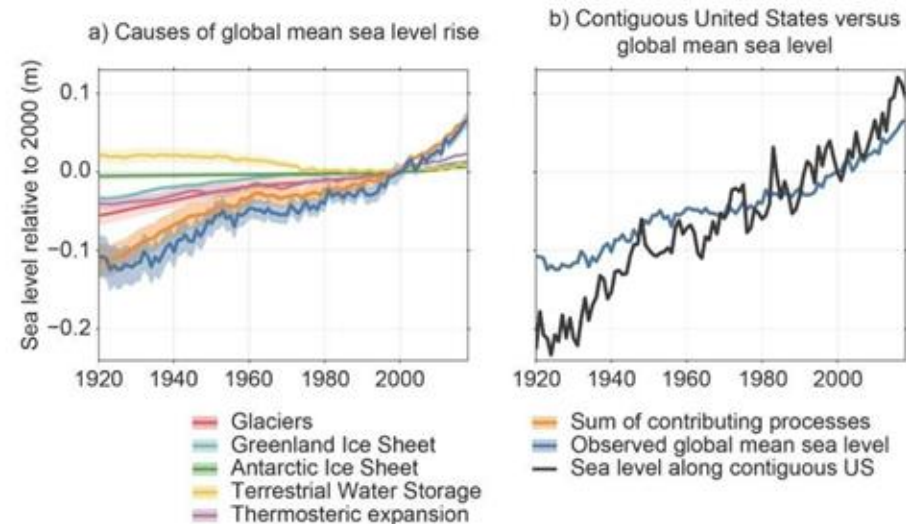


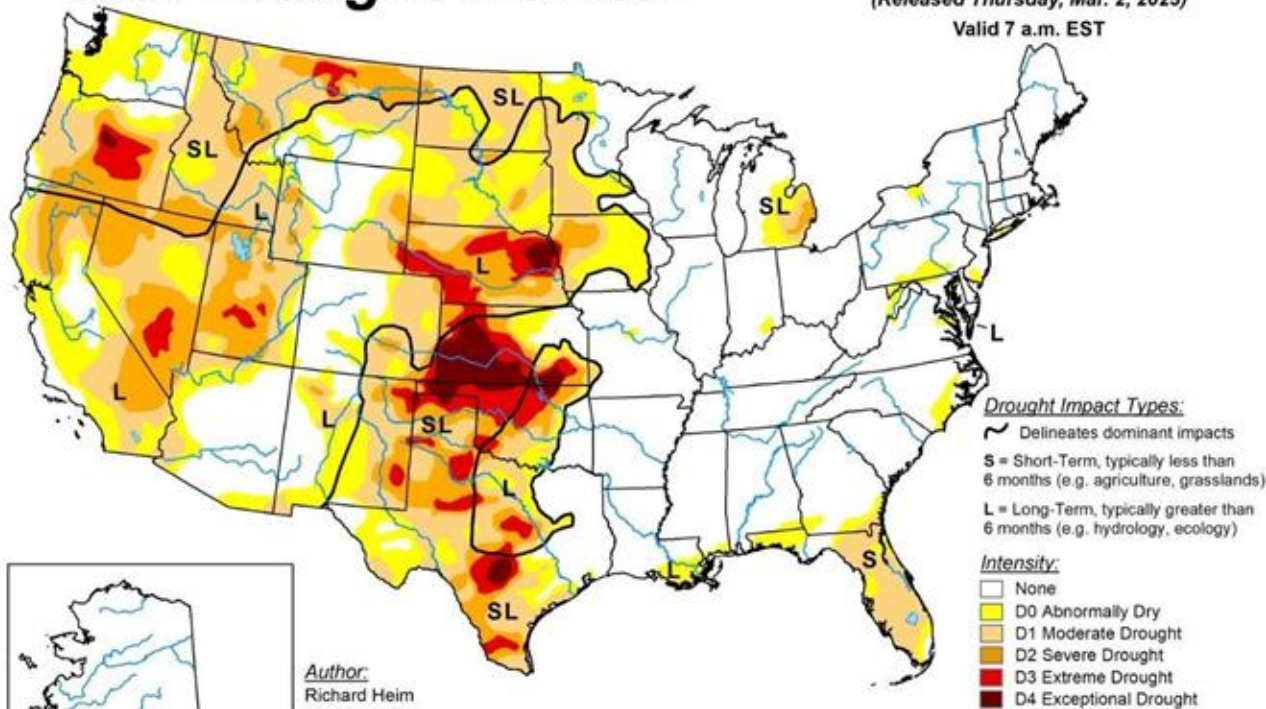
Figure showing the causes of global mean sea level rise and sea level along the contiguous U.S.



A man kayaks through high-tide flood waters in downtown Annapolis, Maryland, on October 29, 2021. Jim Watson/AFP/Getty Images

U.S. Drought Monitor

February 28, 2023
(Released Thursday, Mar. 2, 2023)
Valid 7 a.m. EST



Author:
Richard Heim
NCEI/NOAA

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

This U.S. Drought Monitor Map released **March 2, 2023** came after much-needed winter storms improved drought conditions in California and southern parts of Oregon.



US - 7 MIN READ

As the West's drought eases, this area remains in the worst on record — and it's hitting farmers hard

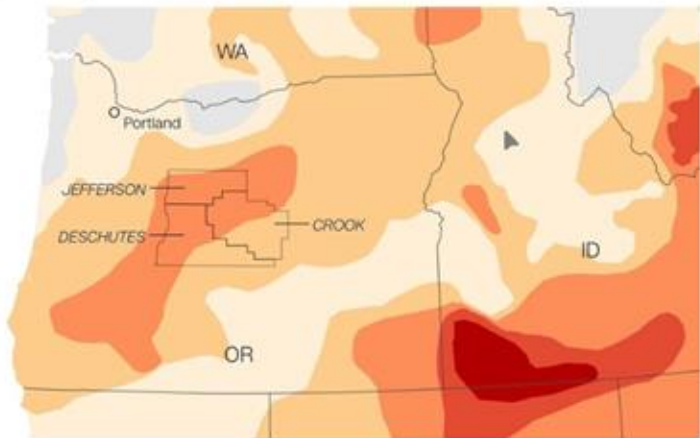
MAR 4, 2023

By Rachel Ramirez

Tracking drought in Oregon

Crook County in Oregon has the West's last remaining exceptional drought after a blockbuster winter of rain and snow. Extreme drought is still present in several Oregon counties, including Jefferson and Deschutes. Across the region, farmers and ranchers face water shortages.

- Abnormally dry
- Moderate drought
- Severe drought
- Extreme drought



Data is reported weekly. Map updated Thursday, May 7 and represents analysis as of Tuesday, May 5.

Source: US Drought Monitor
Graphic: Byron Manley, CNN



Traffic passes a sign reading "No Water, No Farms, No Food" near a pumpkin farm near Madras, Oregon, in August 2021. Nathan Howard/AP

SO WHAT?

- **Human element:** Focus on how the research affects people's lives, health, or the environment.
- **Local connection:** If pitching a local outlet, emphasize why their specific readers should care.
- **Newsiness/timeliness:** Connect the study to current events, a recent policy change, or an upcoming anniversary of a major event.

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Imagine a long river of water vapor in the sky coming into the West Coast. It is how Marty Ralph, the director of the Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego, described the storm event [threatening California](#) at the moment.

The storms are called "atmospheric rivers," which are narrow bands of concentrated moisture in the atmosphere emerging from the warm waters of the Pacific Ocean, cruising more than two miles above the sea. An average atmospheric river transports more than 20 times the water the Mississippi River does, as vapor.



A man wearing an N-95 mask walks in Manhattan against the backdrop of orange skies from Canadian wildfires. Julie Jacobson | Credit: AP



WHAT'S THE STORY?

When crafting a pitch email....

- **Make the subject line punchy.** Avoid academic titles.
- **What's the lede?** The first two sentences should contain the most surprising or impactful finding.
- **Bullet points.** Use bullets for key takeaways to help the journalist quickly gauge what makes the story so interesting.

During interviews ...

- **Analogies are gold.** Avoid jargon and be ready to come with metaphors. If a measurement is "0.5 gigatonnes," compare it to the weight of a fleet of airplanes or the size of a specific city.
- **Give diverse voices:** If the study involves a community, offer to connect the journalist with a non-scientist who is directly impacted by the findings.



Earth is warming faster than previously thought, scientists say, and the window is closing to avoid catastrophic outcomes

UPDATED AUG 9, 2021

By [Angela Fritz](#), [Rachel Ramirez](#)



As the world battles historic droughts, landscape-altering wildfires and deadly floods, a landmark report from global scientists says the window is rapidly closing to cut our reliance on fossil fuels and avoid catastrophic changes that would transform life as we know it.

The state-of-the-science report from the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says the world has rapidly warmed 1.1 degrees Celsius higher than pre-industrial levels, and is now **careening toward 1.5 degrees** — a critical threshold that world leaders agreed warming should remain below to avoid worsening impacts.

Only by making deep cuts to greenhouse gas emissions, while also removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, can we halt the precipitous trend.

"Bottom line is that we have zero years left to avoid dangerous climate change, because it's here," Michael E. Mann, a lead author of the IPCC's 2001 report, told CNN.

Unlike previous assessments, **Monday's report** concludes it is "unequivocal" that humans have caused the climate crisis and confirms that "widespread and rapid changes" have already occurred, some of them irreversibly.

**DATA DOESN'T SPEAK
FOR ITSELF. WE ARE THE
ONES WHO GIVE IT A
VOICE AND A SOUL.**



by **Alberto Cairo**, a journalist and professor of visual journalism at the University of Miami

THANK YOU



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