

# Epilogue

## Letter to a Young Reader

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*Things change.*

*Not all change is benign or beneficial: much is “bad”.*

*Bad change can be endured, even made “good”.*

*If.*

Dear Reader: By now you know that you hold in your hand a “global warming” book mostly lacking in policies or prescriptions. There is a place for advocacy but this is not that place. The singular reason-to-be of *The Changing Climate of South Texas 1900 to 2100* was to provide citizens and leaders with knowledge; knowledge in the form of a readable, state-of-the-science assessment of what we know and where we are headed. We hope you agree that, although this volume lacks elements we wish could have included such the social implications of our current climate scenarios, an important and urgent purpose has been accomplished.

*The Changing Climate of South Texas 1900 to 2100* was the work of leading scholarly authorities, to whom we are deeply grateful. As you have read their chapters, you have found that they explained that the existing semi-arid, subtropical climate, which is already “problematic,” and is very likely to become considerably more so by the end of this century. In 2100, South Texas will be warmer, perhaps very much warmer. It will probably be more moisture-variable, with both more intense storms and more and longer droughts. Paradoxically it may be both rainier as a consequence of influences such as heightened El Niños and/or tropical disturbances, and yet also drier in terms of average soil moisture due to increased evaporation rates. The potential magnitude and shock of this change was illustrated in Chapter Two with an idea that at first blush seems hyperbolic: “Imagine Corpus Christi moved to Laredo by the year 2100.” In fact, while that prospect might prove an exaggeration in one sense - one hundred years may not be long enough to shift the climate of Corpus Christi from subhumid to semi-desert - it is probably too moderate in other ways. After all, Laredo will not have to deal with the very real threat of sea-level rise.

Our expert contributors have also shown that the potential regional impacts and implications of such changes will, with exceptions, tend to be unfavorable for most natural and human economies and ecologies. South Texas is in this sense a microcosm of planetary patterns. While some regions, communities, and systems will benefit from a warmer world, most will not. However, *our region is also different*. This is not the American midwest or western Europe, areas of comparable size but better situated for a variety of reasons to deal with and adapt to climate change. Like the subarctic zone of Alaska, subtropical South Texas faces special challenges due to a combination of physical and human geography factors. Among these the following are noteworthy: rapid population growth; economic underdevelopment; unique but vulnerable ecology; significant but vulnerable agriculture; and limited water supplies. Then there are the three great overarching realities of coastal location, the existing semi-desert to subhumid climate, and, finally, the subtropical location itself.

The result of all this is a regional challenge which we believe is the greatest test South Texas has faced since its first human inhabitants arrived ten or so millennia ago. Our job was to describe and explain that challenge to the best of our ability. It is up to the present and next generation of citizens and leaders to “come and take it.” We are confident that they, you, will do so.

Thank you for your interest and attention. *Vaya con Dios.*



## Subject Index

### A

accretion, 92, 62, 66

aerosols, 7,8,9,69,92,97

air pollution, 45, 92, 93, 96, 97, 101

air quality, 45, 69, 91, 92, 93, 96, 97, 98, 103, 104

albedo, 43

algorithms, 6, 116

amphibians, 80, 81

anomalous, 18

anthropogenic, 7, 8, 9, 17, 21, 53, 54, 69, 81, 92, 97, 104, 111, 112, 121, 127

agriculture sector, 130, 131

assessment, 8, 9, 42, 44, 45, 53, 92, 112, 119, 147, 149, 150, 151

atmosphere, 5, 6, 7, 8, 15, 17, 43, 44, 45, 92, 93, 97, 104, 112, 116, 118, 119, 121, 127

### B

Baffin Bay, 57, 58, 59

bat, 82

birds, 81, 82, 84, 85, 133, 134, 135, 136, 138, 139, 140, 142

Blanco Creek, 113

bobwhite, 83, 85

brackish water, 57, 71, 73, 131

barrier islands, 57, 60, 61, 65, 66, 71

brush, 17, 82, 85, 119

### C

C4 grasses, 79, 82, 85, 86

CAMS, 100

CAMX, 98

Canada, 11, 16

Chihuahuan, 37, 134, 135, 137, 142

climate change, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 19, 42, 44, 45, 46, 57, 60, 67, 71, 73, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 91, 92, 97, 98, 103, 104, 109, 110, 111, 112, 115, 116, 117, 119, 121, 122, 127, 130, 131, 134, 140, 142,

climate drivers, 7

climate gradient, 66, 69

climatologies, 5

compliance grade monitoring, 100

computer modeling, 5

carbon dioxide, 5, 8, 43, 52, 91, 92, 97, 127

chlorofluorocarbon, 8

conceptual models, 57, 96, 97, 111

Corpus Christi, 20, 46, 52, 58, 61, 65, 67, 69, 71, 93, 94, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102

cubical cells, 6

### D

depositional subenvironments, 61

deer, 17, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85

Dengue fever, 45

drought, 12, 23, 26, 27, 34, 37, 45, 57, 61, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 148, 151, 109, 121

drought of record, 12

dry spell, 15, 42, 50, 51

### E

Ecosystems, 5, 58, 92, 148, 149, 151

El Nino, 6, 12

eight-hour ozone, 91, 93, 94, 96, 97, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103

evaporation, 5, 11, 26, 58, 66, 71, 111, 112, 116, 118, 131

evapotranspiration (ET), 15, 19, 23, 26, 45, 109, 112, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 121, 127, 128, 138

emission, 8, 11, 42, 44, 45, 46, 50, 51, 60, 92, 93, 96, 97, 98, 99, 103, 104

energy balance, 5

erosion, 8, 59, 61, 69, 71, 131

estuarine, 57, 58, 60, 66, 67, 71, 73

event based models, 112

extinction event, 17

**F**

feedback mechanism, 6, 7, 8

**G**

geophysical, 9

glaciations, 8

glaciers, 5, 9, 44, 65, 80

global climate, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 44, 46, 60, 67, 80, 81, 85, 86, 92, 109, 110, 121

global warming, 9, 11, 15, 21, 26, 42, 44, 45, 50, 51, 52, 53, 60, 65, 92, 97, 98, 147, 148, 150, 151

greenhouse gas, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 50, 61, 80, 92, 97

greenhouse effect, 43, 127

Guadalupe Estuary, 58, 66

Gulf of Mexico, 15, 17, 19, 34, 37, 58, 67, 112, 134

**H**

Hadley cell, 11

HEC-HMS, 112, 113

high ozone episode, 91, 93, 96, 97

Holocene, 45, 46, 60, 61

horizontal flow, 6

hurricane, 12, 16, 23, 42, 46, 79, 80, 84, 85, 97, 109, 148, 150, 151

hydrologic cycle, 11, 13, 127

hydrologic process, 109

hydrology, 16, 12, 112

hypoxia, 58

human volcano. 21

humidity, 12, 15, 19, 116, 127, 130

**I**

infectious diseases, 45, 46, 81

infrastructure, 148

Ingleside Barrier, 65

interannual variability, 37

intercontinental transport, 92, 103

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 8, 9, 12, 42, 44, 45, 50, 60, 65, 80, 84, 91, 92, 97, 99

Inundation, 59, 61, 66, 67, 71, 121

**L**

land subsidence, 60, 61

latitudinal gradient, 67

Little Ice Age, 16, 21

littoral zone, 59

**M**

malaria, 45, 46

mammal, 17, 80, 82, 85

mangrove, 71, 73

mean annual precipitation, 15, 16, 23, 34, 42, 66, 84

mean annual temperature, 15, 19, 26, 46, 140

mean precipitation, 37, 50

mean summer temperature, 23

mean winter temperature, 23

Medio Creek, 111, 112, 113, 115, 121

megathermal, 18

meteorological, 8, 9, 83, 92, 94, 96, 97, 98, 99, 103

midden, 73

Mission River, 109, 111, 112, 113, 115, 121

model, 6, 7, 11, 12, 44, 45, 46, 50, 58, 61, 71, 91, 92, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 104, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 121, 122, 127, 128, 130, 131

mule deer, 82

Mustang Plains, 17

Mustang Island, 60, 61

## **N**

National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), 92, 94, 103

National Academy of Sciences (NAS), 8, 9, 42

National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), 15, 17, 48, 98, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131

Near Non-Attainment (NNA), 98, 100, 101, 102  
neotropical, 18, 134

non-attainment, 93, 96, 98, 103

NOx (nitrogen-oxygen compound), 92, 102

Nueces, 17, 57, 58, 60, 61, 65, 66, 61, 65, 66, 71, 73, 109

Nueces Delta, 57, 60, 61, 65, 66, 71, 73

Nueces Estuary, 58, 66

numerical model, 98

## **O**

Oligohaline, 73

oyster reef, 58, 71

ozone, 45, 91, 92, 93, 94, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 100, 101, 102, 103

## **P**

Pass Cavallo, 58

perturbation, 7, 91, 92, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103

photochemical modeling, 96, 98

photoperiod, 83

physiography, 58, 67, 134

potential evapotranspiration, 15, 19, 23, 26, 109, 112, 118, 119, 128

Pleistocene, 15, 65, 66

precipitation, 5, 11, 12, 58, 66, 71, 109, 111, 112, 118, 121, 128, 130, 131

precipitation intensity index, 50

Preliminary Conceptual Model (PCM), 96

probabilistic, 6

physiographic, 17

## **Q**

quail, 83, 84, 85, 86, 135

## **R**

radiation, 5, 7, 43, 81, 127

rainfall, 15, 16, 19, 23, 26, 34, 37, 42, 45, 80, 81, 84, 85, 112, 115, 116, 117

*Rangia cuneata*, 73

recharge, 109, 112, 115, 116, 117, 118, 131

reptile, 79, 80, 81

research, 5, 8, 9, 12, 15, 44, 60, 69, 79, 83, 84, 86, 98, 111, 143

rhizophora mangle, 71

Rincon Bayou, 73

Rio Grande, 18, 46, 109, 110, 127, 128, 130, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 149

## **S**

Sabine-Neches Estuary, 58, 66, 67

San Antonio, 46, 52, 58, 66, 93, 94, 96, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 109, 118, 121

sensitivity simulation, 99

simulations, 9, 11, 12, 15, 98, 99, 115, 116, 121, 139, 130, 131

State Implementation Plans (SIP), 96

Stratosphere, 7, 17, 91

subsidence, 60, 61, 69

Southern Oscillation Index (SOI), 67, 68

synoptic, 92, 96, 97, 103

## **T**

Tamaulipan, 17, 133, 134, 135, 139, 142

taxa, 133, 142

temperature amplification, 44, 104

Texas Coastal Ocean Observation Network (TCOON), 98

Thiessen polygon, 12, 112

Thornwaite model, 130

tipping point, 42

total dissolved solids (TDS), 110, 131

Trinity-San Jacinto Estuary, 58, 66, 67

Tropospheric, 91, 104

twenty-first century, 147, 150

## U

Urbanization, 104, 110, 111, 112, 117, 118, 119, 121, 127, 131

## V

Variability, 9, 12, 67, 91, 92, 93, 94, 97, 103, 109, 110

Victoria, 20, 22, 93, 98, 99, 100, 101, 136, 138

volcanic eruptions, 7, 44, 92

vulnerable people, 8, 9, 11, 148, 151

## W

water budget, 52, 110, 111, 112, 118, 121, 122

water quality, 45, 31

white-tailed deer, 80, 82, 83, 84, 135

Wild Horse Desert, 17

World Meteorological Organization, 8