

Pacific Ocean getting warmer, more acidic

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Testing by U.S. scientists finds that the Pacific Ocean is getting warmer and more acidic, while the amount of oxygen is decreasing.

Scientists with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory and the University of Washington say the ocean is becoming increasingly acidic because of its absorption of carbon dioxide, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer reported Friday.

"You don't have to believe in climate change to believe that this is happening," said Joanie Kleypas, an oceanographer with the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, a non-profit organization based in Boulder, Colo. "Acidification is more frightening than a lot of the climate change issues."

Carbon dioxide is a byproduct of burning fossil fuels and in the past 200 years, the ocean has absorbed about half of what's been released into the atmosphere, the scientists say.

The pH of the saltwater has dropped 0.025 units since the early 1990s, the pH scale is exponential, so a one-unit drop is a 10-fold decrease, therefore the new measurement puts the ocean on track for a dramatic decline by the end of the century, the scientists say.

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