Climate change could push flood damage to $3 billion a year in western US, study says
24 August 2022, by Gary Robbins

Atmospheric rivers, or ARs, are airborne plumes of moisture that flow from the tropics to the mid-latitudes, where they can greatly enhance storms that reach the western U.S., particularly California, Oregon and Washington.

At times, the ARs will hit the sides of mountains in places like San Diego County, causing them to unleash heavy rains that sometimes produce floods and mudslides. The phenomenon has become better known to the public in recent years because Scripps started to categorize ARs like hurricanes, ranking them on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most powerful.

The new UCSD study comes in the wake of a report from UCLA that says that climate change has roughly doubled the chances that California will experience a "megaflood" larger than the 30-day deluge that walloped the Sacramento area in 1862. The report claims that some spots could receive the equivalent of 100 inches of rain in a month.

Systems of this size have long been called 100-year storms. But many scientists believe that climate change will make megastorms occur on a more frequent basis.


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