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## Warming trend to cost Illinois billions, study projects

July 25, 2008 | By James Janega, Tribune reporter

If climate change is left unchecked, the costs to Illinois from flood abatement, water treatment, shipping, farming and related goods and services will skyrocket to at least \$43 billion annually by the 2030s, according to a study released this week.

The report by the University of Maryland takes data from more than 30 studies of climate change and its effects on economics and the environment and hits the total button. Presented this week to a national conference of state lawmakers convening in New Orleans, the study breaks out specific costs for eight states, including Illinois.

"We have in the U.S. perceived the issue from one side -- what it would cost us to do something about climate change," said Matthias Ruth, who coordinated the research at Maryland's Center for Integrative Environmental Research. The new study, he said, seeks to calculate the costs of inaction, as well.

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And in many cases, the bill is higher.

"It's pretty clear every sector of the economy is affected directly -- agriculture, shipping, infrastructure -- or indirectly because of goods and services that rely on them," Ruth said. "Every sector of the economy, every state's economy, will be affected."

The study, and others like it, are useful for public policymakers, said Sen. Benjamin Cardin (D-Md.), who sits on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

"It shows that dealing with the problems of global climate change are positive from an economic point of view," Cardin said. "There's this fallacy out there that if you're going to be green, it's going to cost your economy. The reverse is true. Being green can help our economy."

The report crunches together more than a century of weather data, the projected impact of warming in coming decades and economists' regional estimates of costs and damages to provide the bottom line.

Illinois, for instance, can expect more summer heat spells, less winter snow cover and more evaporation of Great Lakes water. The state would also see bigger individual storms, more floods, and attendant higher shipping costs, plus heightened erosion protections and more need to irrigate.

Already, the report says, the Great Lakes states have seen an increase in average August temperatures of 4 degrees Fahrenheit over the 20th Century. The last 100 years also brought a 20 percent increase in annual precipitation, the report shows.

Projections by the Illinois Water Survey suggest average annual temperatures in the next century will climb 2 to 12

degrees, in line with the new report, said Illinois state climatologist Jim Angel. And the bigger rain events predicted in many global warming models are already turning up, he said, citing this summer's flooding in Iowa and Wisconsin as well as widespread flooding last summer that cost \$350 million in the Chicago area alone.

"This kind of fits the pattern we've seen in the last 30 to 40 years of heavier rain events in the Midwest," Angel said. "All of it points to more warm weather and less cold weather."

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