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**New Report: Extreme Downpours and Snow Storms Up 61 Percent in New England**  
*U.S. Senate Urged to Strengthen Key Global Warming Legislation*

Montpelier, VT—Scientists have said for years that global warming was “loading the dice” when it comes to increasing the frequency of severe storms, and a new VPIRG report makes it clear that the New England is already experiencing extreme downpours and heavy snowstorms much more frequently. Specifically, the new report found that storms with heavy rainfall or snowfall are now 61 percent more frequent in the New England region than they were 60 years ago.

"This is the kind of downpour that hurts farmers instead of helping them. It's the kind of torrent that washes away carefully groomed ski hills. It's the kind of rain that flooded out interstate highways in the northwest just today. We're good at dealing with tough weather in Vermont, but there's no reason to make it tougher yet," said Bill McKibben, scholar in residence in Environmental Studies, Middlebury College.

“Vermonters are going to pay the increasing cost associated with inaction on global warming. From our town budgets, which have to pay for the clean up after extreme weather events, to increased utility bills as we pay for line repairs, these costs are real and add up. More frequent downpours, fueled by global warming, will leave Vermont even more vulnerable to dangerous flooding and other costly impacts in years to come,” said James Moore, Vermont Public Interest Research Group clean energy advocate.

The new VPIRG report, *When it Rains, It Pours: Global Warming and the Rising Frequency of Extreme Precipitation in the United States*, examines trends in the frequency of large rain and snow events across the continental United States from 1948 to 2006. Using data from 3,000 weather stations and a methodology originally developed by scientists at the National Climatic Data Center and the Illinois State Water Survey, the report identifies storms with the greatest 24-hour precipitation totals at each weather station, and analyzes when those storms occurred.

Nationally, the report shows that storms with extreme precipitation have increased in frequency by 24 percent across the continental United States since 1948. At the state level, 40 states show a significant trend toward more frequent storms with extreme precipitation, while only one state (Oregon) shows a significant decline.

Key findings for the New England region and Vermont include:

- Storms with extreme precipitation increased in frequency by 61 percent in region from 1948 to 2006. The New England region ranks 1<sup>st</sup> nationwide for the largest increase in the frequency of storms with heavy precipitation.
- Vermont experienced a 57% percent increase in extreme rainstorms and snowstorms during the period studied.

These findings are consistent with the predicted impacts of global warming. Scientists expect some parts of the United States to receive more precipitation as a result of global warming, while other parts receive less. But regardless of the trend in total precipitation, scientists predict that the rain and snow that does fall will be more likely to come in big downpours and heavy snowstorms.

Moore was careful to note that an increase in the frequency of extreme rainstorms does not mean more water will be available. Scientists expect that, as global warming intensifies, longer periods of relative dryness will mark the periods between extreme rainstorms, increasing the risk of drought. For example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts that, under a scenario of intense warming, the percent of land enduring severe drought globally could be 30 times greater by the end of the century than it is today.

“How serious this problem gets is largely within our control – but only if our country acts boldly to reduce the pollution that fuels global warming,” said McKibben.

According to the most recent science, the United States must reduce its total global warming emissions by at least 15 percent by 2020 and by at least 80 percent by 2050 in order to prevent the worst effects of global warming.

“Steep reductions in global warming pollution are challenging but achievable,” noted Moore. “We already have the energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies we need to get started but we need leadership from our elected officials.”

“Bernie Sanders has become the biggest hero in the U.S. Senate on climate change, and this study gives us one more reason to back his efforts. He's weighed the political challenges with great wisdom, and Vermonters should be very proud of how far he's moved the rest of the Senate,” said McKibben.

Tomorrow, the U.S. Senate Environment & Public Works (EPW) Committee is expected to vote on amendments to the “Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act of 2007” (S. 2191), a global warming bill introduced by Senators Lieberman (I-CT) and Warner (R-VA). While recognizing the important efforts of the bill’s supporters on this critical issue, VPIRG said that the legislation must be significantly strengthened to address the challenge of global warming. Specifically, the bill’s current pollution reduction targets fall short of what the science says is necessary to avoid the worst effects of global warming, and the bill gives away far too many subsidies to dirty and dangerous energy sources.

“If we are going to solve the problem of global warming, this bill must be substantially strengthened,” said Moore. “We applaud Senator Sanders for all of his work to strengthen the global warming bill and urge him to keep pushing the bill to include science-based pollution reduction targets, and to limit giveaways to dirty and dangerous energy sources,” concluded Moore.

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*VPIRG is a statewide, citizen-based environmental advocacy organization.*