



## News Release – Olympic Climate Action Program

For immediate release, prepared May 23, 2022

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### A Special Presentation on our Disappearing Olympic Glaciers

#### Wednesday June 15, 6:30-8 p.m. via Zoom

The presentation will last about an hour leaving time for Q & A.

To register go to the Olympic Climate Action website at [olyclimate.org](https://olyclimate.org).

Glaciers are icons of our region and the Olympic Mountains once had over 250 of these spectacular rivers of ice. In a new paper in the *Journal of Geophysical Research: Earth Surface* published in April 2022, Dr. Andrew Fountain and his co-authors published findings from monitoring and modeling glaciers in the Olympic Mountains. Using climate projections their models tell us that the hundreds of glaciers that once brightened the Olympics will have largely disappeared by 2070.

In this virtual program Dr. Fountain will present his research. The program is sponsored by Olympic Climate Action, a grass-roots group seeking a safe, prosperous, sustainable future for residents of the Olympic Peninsula by addressing the threat of climate change.

Fountain is a Professor of Geology and Geography at Portland State University where his research focuses on the changes in glaciers around the world, and how climate drives those changes. He has been studying glaciers since 1980 when he got his PhD at the University of Washington and began working for the U.S. Geological Survey.

“I’ve always been interested in ice,” he said. “I was a nerdy enough kid that I would collect and preserve snowflakes in upstate New York. Studying glaciers is just an extension of that.”

The program will cover the history of glacier change in Olympic National Park, looking at the past 100 years as well as what lies ahead in the next 100 years. He’ll also discuss methods for monitoring glaciers.

Glaciers are much more than beautiful rivers of ice adorning mountains, they are integral parts of the region’s ecosystems and culture. Their meltwater adds cold water to rivers, contributing a substantial percentage to low flows in late summer, and benefiting cold-water loving fish like salmon and bull trout. They attract and challenge climbers who don crampons, harnesses and ropes, then carefully probe crevasse-riddled ice to ascend peaks like 7,980-foot Mount Olympus. But Fountain and his co-author’s work reveals these symbols of the alpine wilderness are disappearing fast. In the warming winters brought by human-driven climate change, what used to fall as snow is often falling as rain, no longer feeding the glaciers.

“With warmer summers causing more ice melt and warmer winters causing less snowfall, the glaciers are being hammered in both seasons,” the paper’s authors report. Monitoring over the decades has revealed that the Olympic Mountains have lost half of their glacier ice surface area since 1900, most of that since 1980. Dozens of glaciers have disappeared.

The plight of glaciers in Glacier National Park is more well-known as researchers have long-predicted its eponymous glaciers will be gone in the next decade or two. But in the snowier Olympics where glaciers are larger and thicker, fed by abundant moisture from weather systems off the Pacific, a future without glaciers seemed nearly impossible.

“To have a date, even one nearly 50 years in the future, is a sad and sobering reminder that climate change is here and impacting us locally,” said Olympic Climate Action co-chair Tony Billera.

With glaciers around the world disappearing, larger and more severe wildfires, and extreme weather event like floods, droughts and heat domes becoming routine news, climate change is already leaving its destructive imprint on our region and the planet. To learn more about Olympic Climate Action and its efforts to address this challenge, see our website at [olyclimate.org](http://olyclimate.org).

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Anderson Glacier, Olympic Mountains (1936 by Asahel Curtis; 2015 by Bryon Adams, Olympic National Park)

