

One Hot Issue

Can New Jerseyans chalk up our last two mild winters to global warming? Not necessarily, says Dave Robinson, the state's climatologist and director of Rutgers' research program on climate change. Robinson, who specializes in global aspects of snow cover, says that while the 1990s saw less snow than did the previous two decades, data suggest that it's premature to tie the decrease to global warming.

"Part of the problem in studying the issue is that weather satellites have only been in existence since the 1960s," he says. "But nothing in the other data we've accu-

culated suggests that the pattern of decreasing snow is due to greenhouse gases. In fact, the 1970s was one of the snowiest decades of the century."

Despite the lack of data, Robinson says "there's no doubt that humans are having an influence over the environment. We have to think about adapting."

At Rutgers, where several scientists study changing climates, a contract between NASA and the Department of Environmental Sciences is funding the development of a sophisticated computer model that can predict global and regional climate scenarios.

Professor Roni Avissar explains that current fears of intense drought and severe floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes are based on un-

reliable predictive models. The highly accurate Rutgers model will help scientists determine the best ways to mitigate the problems that will accompany global climate change.

**Global warming is one big uncontrolled experiment that has to be dealt with sooner than later!'
...Dave Robinson**

