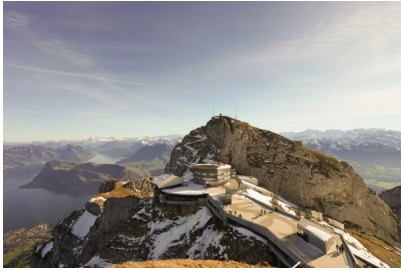


SKI SEASON IN THE ALPS THREATENED BY LACK OF SNOW



For the third year, the level of snow in the the French and Swiss Alps has reduced again affecting the ski season. Several resorts from France to Austria are no longer able to start their season according to the normal plan. Instead of the snowstorms that turn the entire landscape white, warm and sunny weather conditions continue to persist. This weather change is so bad that the ski season in the Alps may even start up to a month later than usual.

Ski resorts in Davos, Switzerland had to use artificial snow to cover their slopes as the natural snowfall was not sufficient. **The lack of snow is worrisome especially considering recent studies and research.**

The Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research (SLF) has carried out several studies that have proved that the snow cover of the Alps can drop by as nearly 70 percent by the end of the 21st century. If people, however, reduce the current rate of global warming and maintain it under 2 °C, the reduction in snow-cover may not exceed 30% by 2100.

More studies also showed that due to the increase in average temperatures, the annual ski season might not even have enough snow for most winter sports.

The effects of the lack of snow are dire as many villages and towns in the mountainous region are almost entirely dependent on snow. The mainstay of their economy is winter tourism, and without the snow, the revenue from the ski season in the Alps will reduce.

The shorter snow season will also decrease the productive season in the year. There are far-reaching impacts of the lack of snow; the warmer weather means an increase in rainfall in the winter months. This will lead to more water flowing into the Alpine streams and rivers. An increase in the water in the ecosystem puts more pressure on hydroelectric facilities and their capacity to handle the overflow.

There will be more dry spells in the summer which may lead to reduced power generation in the summer. On the other hand, the increase in runoff water provides more water for agricultural purpose, precisely irrigation.

The ski season in the Alps is also likely to record fewer avalanches and natural hazards in the forest area. In Switzerland and other parts of the Alps, fewer floods mean better forest management. There will be less need for the primary objective of avalanche protection. **More efforts can then be channeled towards tree planting and erosion control which will improve natural resources and quality of life.** There will also be fewer accidents because of poor weather conditions and snowfalls in the winter season.

A lot of steps can be taken to reduce the rate at which snow cover in the Alps is depreciating. Climate change is affecting the snow cover and the economy, environment, lifestyle and the ski season in the Alps. It would be imperative that more effort is put into place to make sure that the negative effects are mitigated before it gets out of hand.

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