

PERSPECTIVE

# A climate change call to arms

Don't let snowy predictions fool you. Winter is going away.



BILL GREENE/GLOBE STAFF/ILE

**Paul Boulanger of North Andover's Turtle Lane Maple Farm didn't collect sap in spring 2012 because of the warm winter.**

**By David Sleeper and Pamela H. Templer** | OCTOBER 14, 2012

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**THE OFFICIAL START OF WINTER** may still be more than two months away, but in New England, we should be watching the long-term forecasts. Despite predictions for a snowy winter, the season's temperatures have been rising over the long term. And the implications of climate change for this region's economy —

For more than <sup>Comment</sup> five decades, the changing face of winter has been studied by scientists at the 7,800-acre Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest in Woodstock, New Hampshire, which is managed by the USDA Forest Service. According to our ongoing Hubbard Brook Ecosystem Study, average winter temperatures have warmed by 2.5 degrees Fahrenheit since 1955. Maximum snowpack levels have declined by about 10 inches. Over the past 45 years, the ice cover on Mirror Lake in the White Mountains has decreased by 22.5 days.

These changes are incontrovertible. Less certain are the implications to our winter way of life. But in recent meetings between Hubbard Brook scientists and traditional users of the winter landscape — including ski area operators, managers of the White Mountain National Forest, and maple sugar makers — a picture is taking shape of a startlingly different kind of New England than that experienced by our parents and grandparents.

For ski area operators, winter seasons that once somewhat predictably started after

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