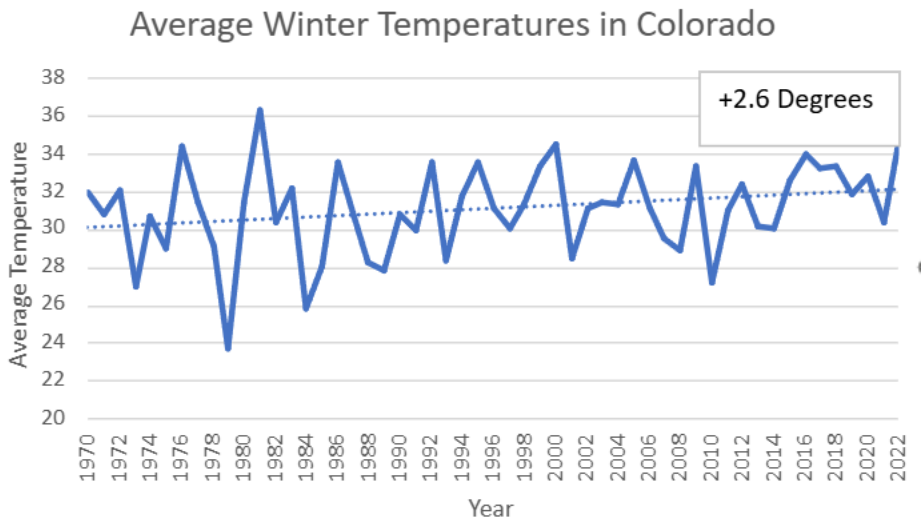
Taylor Bowman has never seen so little snow. The junior at the University of Colorado Boulder and native of the state has been skiing since age six. This season has been the worst in her lifetime.

“Last year I was going up like three days a week, and this year I don’t even want to go because it's not worth driving just to have a mediocre day,” Bowman said.

The poor ski season that Bowman is experiencing is not just a fluke but part of a much larger trend. Data from Climate Central, a climate science nonprofit, shows that winters are warming across the United States. From 1970 to 2025, winters have warmed in 98% of 244 U.S. cities analyzed by 3.9°F on average.



Out of 245 major US cities stretching from coast to coast, 195 of them have shorter winters now than winters prior to 1997. In western states like Colorado, however, fall and spring are warming most rapidly, a shift that effectively squeezes winter from both ends.

The source of these effects is well-documented. Since the 1960s, greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels have accelerated rising global temperatures. The result, winters nationwide are now nine days shorter on average than they were in the 1970s. They are also less consistent. Colorado is no exception to this trend.

Shel Winkley is a weather and climate engagement specialist and meteorologist for Climate Central. He said the most pressing issue isn’t the disappearance of winter altogether, but its declining reliability.

“We still have cold air, and we still have a winter season, but we know that those temperatures are staying warmer into the beginning of the season,” Winkley said. “And we're also seeing those springtime temperatures eat into the end of the season as well.”

That creeping warmth carries consequences beyond a few lost calendar days. Rising temperatures during peak winter months are altering how precipitation falls. Storms that once reliably delivered snow are increasingly flirting with the 32-degree freezing point, sometimes surpassing it. A small temperature shift can mean the difference between snow and rain.

These higher temperatures are also causing more frequent melts that affect the quality of the snow and eroding it faster. As winters grow shorter and warmer, the margin for good powder is becoming more consequential for resort owners.

Monarch Mountain ski area general manager Chris Haggerty said the reputation of a bad winter is what is really hurting the ski industry. Monarch’s visitors fall into three sections: season passholders, destination visitors and Front Range multi-visit guests. The resort is down 15% in overall revenue in the multi-visit category.

“All we hear is the messaging of it's 60 degrees, and it's the worst winter,” Haggerty said. “It's hard to convince yourself to go skiing when the message has been that there is no snow.”

He explained that Front Range Coloradans will not visit the mountains unless they know the ski conditions will be good. Once word gets out the slopes have no snow and the winter conditions are poor, those guests are less inclined to visit.

Ski area closing dates are also creeping earlier into the year. Monarch's closing day in 2025 was April 13. This year, it came two weeks earlier with lifts shutting down on March 29.

Winkley said Colorado will continue to be a ski mecca for at least 50 years thanks to its high elevation. However, other areas such as Utah and California may be highly impacted in the years to come. He insisted that the discussion has to start now to protect beloved ski areas.

“We need to save our winters, we need to save our snow,” Winkley said. “Because we eventually want to be able to gift that to future generations, to maybe our kids and our grandkids.”

Sources:

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Chris Haggerty – Monarch Mountain general manager – chrishaggerty@skimonarch.com