



Vienna, Austria, 13 – 18 April 2008

Will the world's mountains still quench our thirst in 50 years?

Role of the world's mountains in an approaching water crisis

Press conference: Monday 14 April, 14:00-15:00, Press Room

Session: CR14 Monday 14 April 2008, 8:30-12:00, Lecture room, [Programme >>](#)

Mountains are important sources of freshwater; the adjacent lowlands benefit from the highly reliable and disproportionately high flows derived from mountain rivers. A recent study shows that approximately 7% of the world's mountains are essential for downstream water resources today, while further 37% provide important supportive supply.

Each year, the growing world population demands more of this precious resource, especially for agriculture, hydroelectric power and tourism. Water will rapidly become scarcer in certain local and regional hotspots.

The sub-tropics and arid regions are particularly critical regions, which are vulnerable to seasonal water shortages as the population is growing fast. At the same time, climate change is projected to affect mountain climates, altering patterns of snowmelt and ice melt as well as ecosystems. This again is likely to interfere with the favourable timing and reliability of mountain waters.

It is of paramount importance to further quantify the consequences of climate change on mountain hydrology and climatology in order to create a reliable basis for water resources management in a thirsty world.

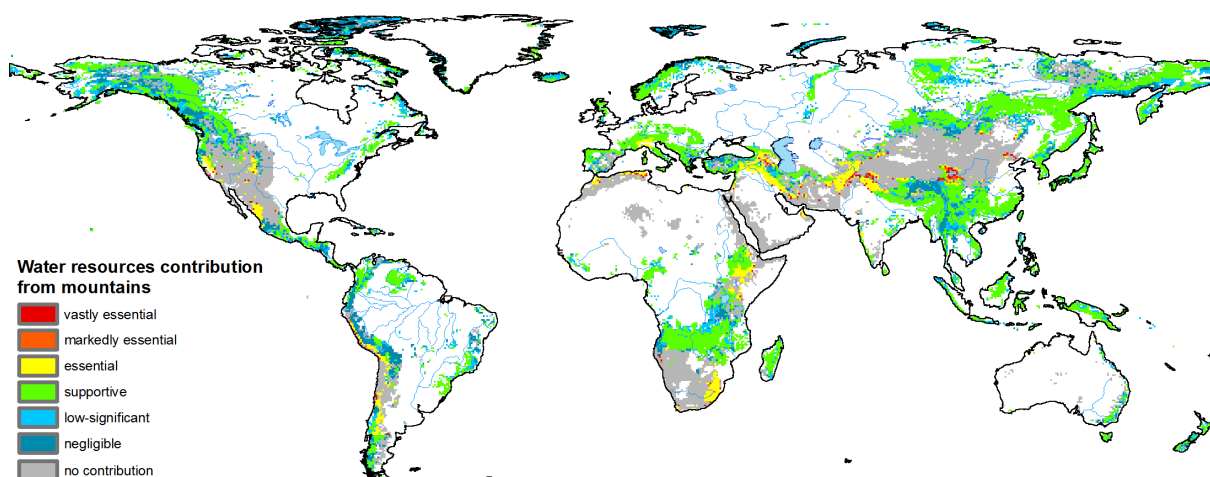


Figure: Extent of mountain contribution to downstream water resources in $0.5^\circ \times 0.5^\circ$ resolution today (from Viviroli et al., 2007).

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