

Most community members are unaware of one of our state's crown jewels right here in Reno-Sparks, the Desert Research Institute (DRI). DRI is a non-profit research institution in Nevada with Reno and Las Vegas campuses. It was founded in 1959 to conduct scientific research on environmental issues affecting Nevada and the surrounding region. However, over the years, it has blossomed into a world-class institute that provides scientific support to government agencies, industries, and communities globally. The North Campus adjacent to Truckee Meadows Community College is visible as you drive north on I-395. The value of having a world-class research institute in our community is immense.

So what is DRI, and what exactly do they do? DRI is a recognized leader in environmental research, particularly in the areas of water resources, air quality, climate change, renewable energy, and natural resources management. Its research has helped address some of the most pressing environmental challenges in Nevada, such as water scarcity, wildfire management, and the impacts of climate change on local ecosystems. They work closely with stakeholders to develop science-based solutions to environmental challenges and to communicate their findings to policymakers, the media, and the public. In addition to its research activities, through its outreach and engagement efforts, DRI is helping to build a more environmentally aware and resilient Nevada.

How does DRI impact our community? DRI has more than 450 highly skilled scientists, engineers, technicians, staff, and students working to answer the scientific questions that matter most to people in our state: questions about climate change, water quality and availability, the sustainability of desert lands, life in extreme environments, education, and more. They have over 40 specialized labs, and while they are a part of the Nevada System of Education, they only get around 16% of their total funding from the state. Most of their revenue is brought into the state by grants they obtain to support their research efforts.

Three key research areas: With climate change, the importance of DRI's work has increased dramatically. *The Division of Atmospheric Sciences* (DAS) provides services related to air quality and associated health risks, cloud and aerosol physics, renewable energy, fire science, and atmospheric dynamics. The division has extensive capabilities in modeling atmospheric and air pollution processes. DAS has developed the Weather and Research Forecast modeling tool that simulates weather, fire, and smoke for firefighting operations and is also home to the Western Regional Climate Center, which monitors the drought. *The Division of Hydrologic Sciences* contributes to understanding hydrologic systems and is a leader in the long-term sustainability of water resources and is also home to DRI's state-of-the-art Ice Core Laboratory, which investigates earth and human history. Finally, *the Division of Earth and Ecosystem Sciences* conducts high-quality research in the life and earth sciences, particularly those dealing with the interactions of geological processes and the impacts of organisms, biological communities, and people on the earth.

DRI's International impact. DRI has conducted numerous international research projects and collaborations with partners worldwide. For example, DRI provided technical support and training to UNEP on air quality monitoring and management in urban areas and research on water resources and climate change in arid and semi-arid regions of Latin America. This work included developing and testing new water management and conservation techniques. Additionally, DRI air quality experts collaborated with Chinese researchers to help preserve the Terracotta Army, artifacts dating from 221 BC from the Qin Dynasty that were deteriorating due to poor air quality.

Not only scientists but educators. DRI's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) Education Program fosters scientific and engineering talent and literacy through education and workforce development. DRI provides educational programs and resources for K-12 students and teachers. This program is critical to the diversification of our economy as our need for a STEM-competent workforce and STEM-qualified teachers continues to grow. Our hidden gem, DRI, is making a difference not only locally and in our state but globally. We can all be proud of their contributions and accomplishments as we help them get the recognition they deserve.

For more information on DRI, go to [Homepage - DRI](#)