Clouds hungry for energy

WASHINGTON (AP) — New studies show clouds suck up huge amounts of energy from the sun, warming the planet as they slowly drift above some parts of the world, raising questions about how to predict climate change.

The findings fuel a new effort by the atmospheric scientists to track the energy absorbed by clouds — a vital ingredient in the planet's climate system. They say the study shows that clouds are a large source of energy absorbed by the atmosphere, which has a significant impact on climate change.

The study, published in the journal Nature, was conducted by researchers from the University of California, Berkeley, and the Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

The researchers used satellite data and computer models to analyze the energy absorbed by clouds over the past decade.

They found that clouds absorb more energy than previously thought, with the energy absorbed by clouds accounting for about 30% of the total energy absorbed by the atmosphere.

The researchers say their findings provide new insights into the role of clouds in climate change and suggest that efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions could have a significant impact on reducing the amount of energy absorbed by clouds.

"Clouds are a major player in the climate system," said lead researcher Peter Lelieveld. "Our findings suggest that efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions could reduce the energy absorbed by clouds and thereby slow down the warming of the planet."