



# Northern Climate ExChange

*independent information, shared understanding, action on climate change*

NCE Update May 13, 2009



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## Announcements

### 1. World Environment Day (WED) June 5 - Climate Change focus

Established by the UN General Assembly in 1972 to mark the opening of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, it is commemorated yearly on 5 June. WED is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action.

The theme for WED 2009 is '[Your Planet Needs You-UNite to Combat Climate Change](#)'. It reflects the urgency for nations to agree on a new deal at the crucial climate convention meeting in Copenhagen some 180 days later in the year, and the links with overcoming poverty and improved management of forests.

This year's host is Mexico which reflects the growing role of the Latin American country in the fight against climate change, including its growing participation in the carbon markets.

[www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)

### 2. Young Leaders Summit on Northern Climate Change

Inuvik, Northwest Territories - August 17-20, 2009

Are you concerned about climate change and what it means for the future? Do you want to make your voice heard and be part of the solution? The Young Leaders' Summit on Northern Climate Change is your opportunity!

For four days this August, young leaders will converge in Inuvik, Northwest Territories, to discuss climate change, share their stories and build their skills. The summit will empower young leaders to tackle the greatest challenge facing the planet-climate change. The four action-packed days will be a mixture of outdoor



field-trips, indoor lectures and participatory activities.

Visit the [summit website](#) for more information.

<http://www.climateleaders.ca/>

### **3. Call for Abstracts NCP / AMAP Symposium on Human Health and Arctic Environmental Contaminants - 10-12 June**

The Northern Contaminants Program (NCP) and Arctic Monitoring Assessment Program (AMAP) are hosting a joint symposium in Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada from 10-12 June 2009. The results of the two assessments on human health effects of environmental contaminants in the Arctic over the past 6 years will be released at this meeting. This symposium will provide a forum for health professionals, Indigenous and local people, senior scientists, policy-makers, and young scientists to contribute to the future directions of the NCP and AMAP.

Second Announcement and Call for Abstracts - for Poster Session (young scientists)  
NCP / AMAP Symposium on Human Health and Arctic Environmental Contaminants  
**Deadline: 22 May 2009**

For further information visit the website:

<http://www.amap.no/conferences/hhsymposium2009/>

## **Articles**

### **1. The Arctic fight for survival**

*As countries scramble to stake their claim to resource-rich land in the Arctic ahead of a May 13 deadline, the native people of the region are left with an uncertain future. Drilling for oil and gas will not only disturb the indigenous way of life - it could, along with climate change, potentially destroy it. Al Jazeera spoke to two indigenous people from Arctic communities, with two very different ideas on how to tackle the coming change.*

By Jacqueline Head  
Al Jazeera  
May 22, 2009

High up in Alaska, on the tip of an island north of the Arctic Circle, lies a small town called Kivalina. The inhabitants of this settlement are slowly moving away, as the ice surrounding their island melts into the Chukchi Sea.

Enoch Adams, 49, an Inupiat Eskimo from Kivalina, is one of a group of residents taking legal action against dozens of oil, electricity and coal companies over their contribution to global warming, which is destroying their home.

The average temperature on the island has risen at least three degrees Fahrenheit over the past 50 years, and residents believe this has led to shorter winters and longer summers, not to mention thinning ice around the island.

Adams says because of the melting ice, they cannot go out as far to catch animals they need to eat, making it harder for their tiny community to survive in the Arctic.

But an even greater concern is melting permafrost, which threatens to sink the entire island. "During summer, there's been thawing of permafrost," Adams says.

"There's a slab up our river where a thaw has occurred and it's getting bigger. The permafrost underneath the ground just melted and the tundra has sunk into it, and created a sinkhole.

"In the back of our minds we're next; down the sinkhole. There is that fear, that concern in the back of your mind: What if it does happen to us? Our people pray that doesn't happen."

## **Corporate responsibility**

Adams says he understands the demand for oil and gas is not going to go away, but he wants the companies to understand what they are responsible for.

"Our attempt is to tell these people to stop, stop and think 'Is this the best way to go?' "There's got to be a better way and we should find out what that is and proceed from there," he says.

"We have a livelihood that we need to protect we have a way of life that needs to be preserved. "We've been up here for thousands of years. We know what's best for us up here, we know what animals to go after and what's nutritious."

The first hearing of the case, which accuses oil, gas and coal companies of creating a false scientific debate about global warming, begins on May 19.

Adams hopes it at the very least slows their actions down.

"At least let them take a serious look at what they've been doing and paying for," he says.

"They've been held unaccountable. They've acted with no regard for consequences for what they've done, and now the consequence of what's taken place is a huge one."

## **A different approach**

On the other side of the Arctic Circle, in Finnmark, Norway, reindeer herding communities are taking a different approach to petroleum exploration in their territory.

Anders Oskal, a 36-year-old Sami from a small village in the region, believes that indigenous communities can secure their future by being realistic about the inevitability of oil and gas development and collaborating with the industry over their plans.

Oskal has a saying: The tide will lift all boats, as long as the boats are seaworthy. "When we talk about petroleum exploration in the Arctic we could see this as a tidal wave that's coming," he says.

"And now it's important to prepare the small indigenous boats so that they stay afloat not only when the tide is rolling in, but also so that they settle on an even keel when the tide retracts."

Reindeer husbandry is a semi-nomadic, ancient way of life for indigenous people in the Arctic, with herding communities stretching from Sweden to the depths of Siberia.

Building oil and gas pipelines would create serious obstacles on migratory routes and also potentially contribute further to climate change, which is already taking its toll in the region.

## **Thawing earlier**

Oskal, who works as the director-general of the International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry, has already witnessed rivers and lakes thawing much earlier in the year than usual.

He worries that climbing winter temperatures could allow rain to get in under the melting snow, then form a layer of ice on the ground, preventing reindeer from being able to eat the food underneath.

But while being under no illusion that his traditions are under threat, Oskal believes that oil and gas companies could benefit communities in the Arctic, by using some of their profits to help build schools, hospitals, processing plants and other infrastructure.

"Oil and gas development need not be the worst to happen to reindeer herders because as opposed to the other energy alternatives, it's also quite profitable," he says.

"We must have a realistic perspectives on the situation: It is not a question about if Arctic petroleum reserves will be developed, its a question about how.

Oskal says looking at the bigger picture will allow his communities to survive long past the "petroleum age".

"Petroleum development is a snapshot in the history of reindeer-herding people, maybe 50 years," he says.

"But we still have to live in these areas after, and we have to ask, how are we going to do this? There has to be a future for reindeer and reindeer herders also after the petroleum age."

[www.english.aljazeera.net/](http://www.english.aljazeera.net/)

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## **2. Efforts to save salmon may be undone by climate change**

By Rocky Barker  
McClatchy Newspapers  
*Miami Herald*  
May 12, 2009

BOISE, Idaho -- The Pacific Northwest has spent two decades retooling dams, rebuilding damaged watersheds and restoring stream flows to keep salmon from disappearing.

The United States has invested billions in the effort - \$350 million in 2004 alone - by far the most money spent on any endangered species.

But a new threat is more devastating than the gill nets that sent dozens of salmon runs into extinction. It is more deadly than the hydroelectric turbines that still kill millions of migrating smolts. In fact, it raises doubts about whether salmon will survive in the Northern Pacific at all.

Climate change already has made rivers warmer and spring runoff earlier, disrupting the life cycle of the fish that are an icon of the region.

No matter what actions the world takes to reduce greenhouse gases, river temperatures in more than half of the lower-elevation watersheds may exceed 70 degrees by 2040 - too hot for salmon.

"The only salmon that are going to survive the century mark are the ones in the large populations in the higher elevations that are still going to have snow and cold water," said Jim Martin, a former chief of fisheries for the state of Oregon.

But even these runs and those as far north as Alaska would be threatened if the world does not reduce gases like carbon dioxide over the next 50 years.

This means the hydroelectric dams that provide more than half of the electricity in the region - without emitting carbon dioxide - are more valuable than ever.

That presents an ethical challenge to the environmentalists, Indian tribes and commercial and sport fishermen who have fought for years to reduce the impacts of dams on the fish.

The dams are no longer just economic drivers in the region. They could be - at least for the short term - critical tools for reversing the most dramatic environmental peril of our time.

The dilemma is another for environmentalists who are slowly recognizing that they will have to reconcile their decades-old efforts to "save all the parts" of the environment with the increasingly urgent need they see to stop or reverse climate change.

Environmentalists can't simply try to stop what they consider harmful activities, said Pat Ford, executive director of Save our Wild Salmon. They need to offer solutions.

"If you are not working both, you are setting up a blind spot you cannot sustain," he said.

"We are no longer in the time when these are economic versus environmental arguments," said Steve

Wright, administrator of the Bonneville Power Administration, which markets the power from the dams and uses some of the proceeds to pay for fish recovery. "Increasingly these are environmental versus environmental arguments."

Scientists expect climate change to force an ecological bottleneck. Even in a best-case scenario, a period of maximum impacts from climate change will affect living conditions for all species - including humans - before human efforts can reverse climate change.

That means making painful choices about priorities - choices being faced by environmentalists worldwide. "I think global warming demands leadership from conservationists in a way we haven't consistently done yet," Ford said.

Idaho's Snake River sockeye were listed under the Endangered Species Act in 1991, requiring that the federal government take no action that will jeopardize the existence of the species. That has driven the management of the dams, farming, logging and residential development in salmon-spawning habitat across a Columbia watershed about the size of France.

[www.miamiherald.com](http://www.miamiherald.com)

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### **3. Arctic voyage to focus on climate change**

By Carol Sanders  
Winnipeg Free Press  
May 11, 2009

A reporter who grew up on a turkey farm in the Interlake has quit his job and invested his life savings in a journey through the Northwest Passage to draw attention to climate change.

On June 6, Cameron Dueck and his four-member crew will set sail from Victoria, B.C. for the 7,000-nautical-mile expedition to Halifax through Canada's warming north, documenting the changes of the lives of the people whose homes are along the way.

"I put all my life savings into it and more," the 35-year-old said from Hong Kong where he now lives. "I borrowed money from my family and the bank ... The boat is financed. And I quit my job in the middle of the recession."

Politicians, scientists and experts talking about climate change "has made some people's eyes glaze over a little bit," said Dueck, who grew up near Riverton, Man.

He's hoping that the voyage's spirit of adventure will draw people who can follow their journey aboard the 40-foot yacht Silent Sound through the expedition web site's photos and words.

"The best-case scenario is we are successful in telling the story of climate change through the eyes of people living there, and that telling that story captures the imagination of people who have become a little bit blasé."

A documentary film maker will be on board to help tell the story, said Dueck.

"We really want all the material to strike people in a fresh way."

While the trip aims to be carbon neutral, Dueck is no environmental zealot.

The sail boat will use its motor on calm days when needed. And the reporter who's covered finance in Singapore and Hong Kong believes the entrepreneurial spirit will be key to mitigating the impact of climate change.

"I can sort of see how business is going to be a crucial part of the equation... We've got to find ways to do things that are financially sustainable."

Dueck, who grew up a stone's throw from Lake Winnipeg, didn't get his sea legs until he moved to Chicago at the age of 21. The Red River College Creative Communications grad took a job writing for the Chicago Board of Trade. He took up sailing on Lake Michigan and there was no turning back.

He moved on to Singapore but the financial reporter quit in 2004 to "boat-hop" his way across the ocean and get his sea legs.

He went to work in Hong Kong till the ocean beckoned once more, and Dueck got the idea to sail the Northwest Passage and to make a mission of it.

The youngest of six kids said his 80-year-old dad, Leonard in Riverton, Man., is planning to join him in Victoria for the launch of the four-month voyage. Dueck said his mother, Linda, passed away late last year but knew about his plan and supported him.

"I wish she could've seen me do it."

The rest of his family of Manitoba landlubbers wish him well, said his nephew Eric Dueck in Riverton. "I think it's pretty ambitious," who admires his uncle's spirit of adventure. "That's exactly something he would do."

Cameron Dueck likely inherited his daring from their dad, said his brother Terry on the family farm. Their father, Leonard, left the safe, secure haven of the family farm in Rosenort in southern Manitoba decades ago for the wilds of Riverton in the Interlake. There, he cleared all his own land and established the turkey farm that thrives today.

"He was looked on by his friends as a bit of a nut," said his son Terry Dueck "...but he had that sense of adventure."

for more information, see [www.openpassageexpedition.com](http://www.openpassageexpedition.com)

[www.winnipegfreepress.com](http://www.winnipegfreepress.com)

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#### **4. Shrimp said at risk from North Atlantic warming**

By Alister Doyle  
Reuters  
May 7, 2009

OSLO (Reuters) - A \$500 million North Atlantic shrimp fishery may be vulnerable to climate change that could disrupt the crustaceans' life cycle and mislead them into hatching when food is scarce, scientists said.

Any damage to stocks of the northern shrimp -- a small, sweet-tasting variety popular in salads -- could have knock-on effects in the ocean food chain ranging from algae to cod, according to a Canadian-led team of experts.

"The shrimp is the marine equivalent of the canary in the mine shaft. It's an indicator of climate change," Peter Koeller, the lead author of the study at the Bedford Institute of Oceanography in Canada, told Reuters.

Writing in Friday's edition of the journal *Science*, the scientists said that the shrimp timed mating so that their eggs hatch when algae that shrimp larvae feed on are most abundant.

"They have evolved to mate the previous year at just the right time to take advantage of spring blooms," said Koeller. Eggs carried by the females take between 6 and 10 months to incubate over the winter.

"But climate change could decouple the match" between seabed temperatures and food, he said of findings with colleagues in the United States, Britain, Denmark, Iceland and Norway.

The scientists found that the crustaceans, which live from the Gulf of Maine to Arctic waters north of Norway, time their mating according to water temperatures on the seabed where the adults live. Warmer waters could disrupt that timing.

Previously, one theory had been that the larvae hatched in direct response to a chemical trigger from the blooms, for instance cued by dead algae drifting down from the surface.

The shrimp make up about 70 percent of the 500,000 tons of cold-water shrimp harvested annually from the world's oceans. Koeller said the fishery was worth about \$500 million.

Koeller said shrimp were an important link in the food chain -- they feed on algae and are in turn eaten by fish. Overfishing of cod has helped a sharp rise in shrimp populations.

The U.N. Climate Panel says that a build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, caused mainly by mankind's use of fossil fuels, could push up world temperatures and cause more heatwaves, more powerful storms and rising ocean levels.

(Editing by Angus MacSwan)

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## 5. 'Gruelling' Arctic mission ends

*The Catlin Arctic Survey, a gruelling 73-day expedition to measure the thickness of sea-ice, has ended*

By David Shukman  
BBC News  
May 13, 2009

At 1750 BST on Wednesday, two planes landed safely on the floating Arctic ice to collect Pen Hadow, Ann Daniels and Martin Hartley.

Their data will help study the impacts of global warming in the region.

It also reinforces a new forecast, by a leading UK scientist, who says that the Arctic sea-ice could vanish in summertime far sooner than predicted.

The Catlin survey ended slightly ahead of schedule to ensure a safe pick up.

Speaking on a live link from the Arctic landing strip, Mr Hadow said that it had been a difficult but successful expedition.

"In our time here we have captured around 16,000 observations and [taken] 1,500 measurements of the thickness of the ice and snow as well as its density," he said.

He added that his team was now handing its valuable data, collected primarily through drilling following the failure of a mobile radar unit, over to the scientists.

"[The data] seems to suggest it was almost all first-year ice," Mr Hadow said.

He revealed that over the length of the survey the average thickness of the sea ice was 1.774m.

"Our science advisors had told us to expect thicker, older ice on at least part of the route, so it is something of a mystery where that older ice has gone. It'll be interesting to see what scientists think about this."

**Thinner and thinner**

At the same time, Peter Wadhams, head of the polar ocean physics group at the University of Cambridge has brought forward his estimate for the demise of summer sea-ice in the Arctic.

He believes the ice, which has been a permanent feature for at least 100,000 years, is now so thin that almost all of it will disappear in about a decade.

He says it will become seasonal, forming only during the winter.

He told the BBC: "By 2013, we will see a much smaller area in summertime than now; and certainly by about 2020, I can imagine that only one area will remain in summer."

Although this bleak forecast is reinforced by the survey team's data, Professor Wadham's new assessment is based on analysis of nearly 40 years of sonar data gathered on Royal Navy submarines patrolling beneath the ice - the first, HMS Dreadnought, was in 1971.

Until recently, most climate forecasts suggested that the Arctic Ocean would have ice-free summers only towards the end of the century.

The most extreme scenario was for the ice to retreat as soon as 2013, but that was dismissed by many as far too soon.

Now Professor Wadhams, who has studied the Arctic for the past 40 years, says that there is "almost a breakdown" in the ice-cover.

Over most of the Arctic, there has been a massive decline in the amount of so-called multi-year ice - ice that is tough enough to withstand the summer warmth.

Much of what is left of this ice accumulates in an area north of Greenland and Ellesmere Island in Canada, and may form what he calls "a last holdout, a kind of Alamo".

Professor Wadhams said: "The change is happening so fast. It's the result of this steady thinning over four decades that has brought it to a state where its summer melt is causing it to disappear.

"It's like the Arctic is covered with an egg shell and the egg shell has been thinning to the point where it is now just cracking completely."

His prediction comes as the Canadian Ice Service prepares to issue its annual summer forecast. After a record melt in 2007, and an above-average melt last year, this coming summer is seen as crucial for determining the rate at which the sea-ice will disappear.

An ice service analyst, Dr Trudi Wohleben, said that the ice was likely to retreat as much as it had in the past two years.

Typically, about 40% of the Arctic Ocean is covered with older, thicker ice, but that has been greatly reduced.

Referring to the direct measurements taken by the Catlin team, Dr Wohleben said: "It is very nice to have 'ground-truthing' of what you're interpreting from the satellite data.

"So when we look at the imagery, we're expecting the first year ice to be between 1m and 2m thick and it's nice to have those numbers confirmed."

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## **6. Former coal mine aids Arctic climate research**

By Pierre-Henry Deshayes  
Yahoo News (AFP)

May 8, 2009

NY-AALESUND, Norway (AFP) - Out of place in the snowy, polar landscape, the train that once hauled coal out of the mountain serves as a reminder to scientists at the Ny-Aalesund Arctic research station of the origin of the planet's woes.

Before becoming an international research station where scientists study the effects of global warming, this cluster of coloured buildings in the northwest corner of Norway's Svalbard archipelago was once a mining site for fossil fuels now blamed for climate change.

A firedamp explosion in the coal mine killed 21 men in 1962. The disaster ended the mining era in Ny-Aalesund, which is closer to the North Pole just 1,200 kilometers (745 miles) away than to Oslo, where the tragedy brought down the government.

Scientists in white lab coats have since replaced the black-faced miners, and the remote town -- the northernmost in the world -- has a "broader broadband than London," boasts Kings Bay, the company that runs the site.

There is however no mobile network, and visitors are asked to turn off their cell phones to avoid disturbances to the research station's finely-calibrated measuring instruments.

"It's good to be far away to measure trends" in carbon dioxide emissions, Swedish researcher Johan Stroem said from the Zeppelin atmospheric measuring station, located on a peak overlooking Ny-Aalesund.

"When you're in the middle of it, you don't see it. Exactly like when you're in the middle of the forest, you can see a few trees but not the whole thing," he said.

A somewhat erratic cable car brings visitors and researchers up to Zeppelin, which measures, among other things, fine particles from forest fires in North America brought to the Arctic by air currents. In graphics taped to the walls, all the arrows point upwards, with particularly sharp increases seen in recent decades.

"It's not so much the high level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that worries me. Humankind will always adapt and change its lifestyle. We won't go on vacation to the Maldives anymore. But it's the rate at which the concentrations increase which is worrying," Stroem said.

"Over the past 20 years, we've seen a jump of CO2 concentrations at a speed which has never been observed before," he said.

The Svalbard archipelago is on the frontline of global warming. Each year, the volume of its ice cap shrinks by 13 cubic kilometers (3.11 cubic miles) or the equivalent of 5.2 million Olympic-size swimming pools.

And the glaciers around Ny-Aalesund are no exception.

"From one year to the next, I can see them retreat with my own eyes," said Stroem, who has been coming to the research station since 1999.

Jack Kohler, a US glaciologist at the Norwegian Polar Institute, paints a dark picture of the future.

"In 50 to 100 years from now these glaciers will be shadows of themselves. The larger ones will still be here but the smaller ones will be gone," he predicted, expressing concern about the largely overlooked impact the melting of smaller glaciers will have on rising ocean levels.

At the town limits, a docking port for blimps attests to Ny-Aalesund's unique role in the history of polar expeditions.

Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, Italy's Umberto Nobile, and Lincoln Ellsworth of the United States left here in 1926 aboard the blimp Norge to become the first team ever to reach the North Pole with certainty. At the rate at which the sea ice is melting today, the North Pole will soon be more easily accessible by boat.

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## 7. Global warming critics appointed to science boards

*Harper government's actions are 'dreadful' and undercut public pledges to tackle climate change, leading glaciologist says*

By Bill Curry  
CBC News  
May 11, 2009

OTTAWA - Top Canadian scientists are accusing the Harper government of politicizing science funding and jeopardizing climate research by naming global warming critics to key boards that fund science.

The government's actions are "dreadful," said Garry Clarke, a leading international glaciologist at the University of British Columbia, and undercut public pledges to tackle climate change. "Their mouths are doing one thing and their hands are doing something different," Prof. Clarke said.

Already alarmed over funding cuts to basic research, scientists say two appointments in particular are worrisome. Mark Mullins, the executive director of the conservative-leaning Fraser Institute - and a former adviser to the Canadian Alliance Party - was recently appointed to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), which funds university research projects that have included studies on climate change.

Dr. Mullins is an economist and critic of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the United Nations-sanctioned scientific body that has authored warnings of floods, famine and extinctions that triggered political efforts around the world to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions.

More than 200 Canadian scientists have contributed to the IPCC's work and most of them are employed by the federal government.

The 18-member NSERC already includes another Harper government appointee, mathematician Christopher Essex, who wrote a book challenging the "myth of climate change."

On the same day Dr. Mullins was appointed to NSERC, April 23, another skeptic of global warming was appointed to the board of the Canada Foundation for Innovation, which funds large research projects. John Weissenberger is a close friend of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, a former chief of staff in the Harper government and a geologist who works for Husky Energy in Alberta.

Dr. Weissenberger has written opinion pieces in the media and on his Internet blog expressing his "skepticism about global warming." That and other comments by the two appointees on the public record were compiled by NDP researchers and verified by The Globe and Mail.

Both Dr. Mullins and Dr. Weissenberger told The Globe and Mail they are well-qualified for the positions, and both said they have no intention of using the posts to advocate for reduced funding for climate science.

While both NSERC and the Canada Foundation for Innovation fund some climate-change research, climate scientists are particularly concerned that their main source of federal funding - the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences - will have to shut its doors next year unless it receives new funding.

Prof. Clarke, who has co-authored IPCC reports, said "I don't see anything wrong with putting a Fraser Institute person in there. It's just when there's a sense that they're going to stack the deck that it becomes problematic."

University of Victoria climatologist Andrew Weaver, another lead author of past IPCC reports, said politics should be kept at a distance from these boards. He also said it is "very disturbing" that people who dispute global warming are making strategic decisions on scientific research.

"What would the public think if we appointed outspoken proponents of the fallacy 'smoking doesn't cause cancer' as members of the boards funding medical and, in particular, cancer research?" he said.

Bill Rodgers, a spokesman for Environment Minister Jim Prentice, declined comment on the individuals

appointed. But he did say: "Since we took office in 2006, we have made no bones that climate change is one of the greatest challenges the world is facing."

NDP MP Bill Siksay said the appointments highlight the need for the Conservatives to honour their 2006 pledge to have federal appointments reviewed by an independent commission. "This is a requirement in a democratic society to have that kind of oversight," he said.

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## **8. Obama team keeps Bush polar bear climate rule**

By Deborah Zabarenko  
Reuters  
May 8, 2009

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Obama administration said on Friday it will keep a Bush-era rule that weakens protection for polar bears' icy habitat and plays down links between the threatened status of the species and climate change.

"Seeing the polar bear's habitat melting and an iconic species threatened is an environmental tragedy of the modern age," U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar said in a telephone briefing.

"The best course of action for protecting the polar bear under the Endangered Species Act is to wisely implement the current rule, not revoke it at this time," which would cause confusion, Salazar said.

Government scientists would continue to monitor the situation, he said. But that did not mollify environmental groups that opposed the rule.

Polar bears depend on Arctic sea ice as a platform for hunting seals, their main prey. The U.S. Geological Survey said two-thirds of the world's polar bears -- some 16,000 -- could be gone by 2050 if predictions about melting sea ice hold true.

Former President George W. Bush's administration listed polar bears as threatened under the Endangered Species Act on May 14, 2008, but issued a rule that left global warming off the list of threats the federal government must consider in protecting the bear. This so-called polar bear special rule will be retained. The rule exempts from government review all activities that occur outside the polar bears' range.

### **'We Need to Act'**

Officials at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which administers the Endangered Species Act, acknowledged the overall relationship between carbon dioxide emissions and global warming.

But they said in the briefing with Salazar that it is impossible to link a specific source of carbon dioxide pollution -- a coal-fired power plant in Pennsylvania or a cement factory in Georgia, for example -- to the condition of a particular polar bear population.

Environmental groups decried the administration's decision.

"Failing to rescind this rule continues the Bush legacy of ignoring global warming science and blocking any meaningful action to protect the polar bear," Melanie Duchin of Greenpeace said by telephone from Anchorage, Alaska.

Noah Greenwald of the Center for Biological Diversity questioned the Obama team's argument that the Endangered Species Act is not meant to deal with large threats, noting that it was used to limit the use of the pesticide DDT.

Senator Barbara Boxer, who chairs the Environment and Public Works Committee, also disagreed with the move.

"Monitoring the situation will not tell us more than we know now -- that the polar bear is threatened and we need to act," the California Democrat said in a statement.

Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska said she was pleased with the department's decision to retain the existing rule, "which provides rational measures for the protection of polar bears within their natural range."

Unlike the Bush White House, which opposed any broad, mandatory measures to limit the greenhouse gas emissions that spur climate change, President Barack Obama favors capping these emissions through legislation.

A climate change bill is moving through Congress and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has declared that climate-warming emissions are a danger to human health, which means the agency has the authority to regulate these emissions as pollutants.

On April 28, Salazar rescinded a different Bush-era rule that exempt oil and gas companies operating in polar bear habitats from special reviews designed to ensure that they were not harming the animals. The Alaska energy industry said the move could slow exploration and production activity in the state.

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I am sure that you have noticed the NCE is using a new format for our newsletter.

We will be tweaking the design over the next few weeks and would appreciate your feedback and/or suggestions on how it is working for you.

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Thanks!  
Northern Climate ExChange

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*The next Update from the Northern Climate ExChange will be sent out Wednesday, May 20, 2009*