

# Bush focus of lawsuit on climate

1990 law requires study every 4 years

**Corinne Purtill**

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A Tucson-based environmental group is suing the Bush administration for refusing to produce a federally mandated national climate-change report that is several years overdue.

The **Center for Biological Diversity**, along with environmental groups Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, filed the suit Nov. 14 in U.S. District Court.

The suit accuses the White House of ignoring a 1990 law requiring the government to produce a national assessment on global warming every four years.

The last report was published in October 2000. White House officials say they aren't working on another national assessment, which is more than two years overdue.

Instead, the U.S. Climate Change Science Program, the government organization created in 2002 to handle climate-change research, is putting together a series of 21 reports that the program says satisfies the spirit of the 1990 law.

The first of those reports came out this year and more are expected to trickle in early next year, said Kent Laborde, spokesman for the climate-change program.

But the environmental groups say that approach does not provide the government or the public with the information they're entitled to under the 1990 law.

"What the law requires is a national assessment, something usable and accessible," said **Kassie Siegel of the Center for Biological Diversity**. "A bunch of reports doesn't really help this."

A national report on global warming is required every four years by the Global Change Research Act of 1990. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., co-sponsored the bill.

When the 2004 deadline for the next assessment rolled around with no sign of a report, McCain and Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., contacted the Government Accountability Office to check on its status. A 2005 GAO audit found that the Bush administration missed the assessment's deadline. The audit also said it was "unclear" whether the 21 reports proposed by the administration would adequately address the effects of climate change as the law required.

Climate-change program officials defended their plan.

"It's more important to have good, solid, credible science that is the basis of public policy, rather than something that is done for the sake of expediency," Laborde said.

The 2000 assessment warned that without efforts to reduce greenhouse gases, temperatures in the western U.S., including Arizona, could rise 8 to 11 degrees by the 2090s and there would be more extreme wet and dry years.

Released in the final months of the Clinton administration, the report received little publicity.

"It clearly was not distributed," said Kathy Jacobs, executive director of the Arizona Water Institute and a co-author of the 2000 assessment. "The Bush administration did not create it, and they did not feel comfortable in releasing it."

In March 2005, Climate Change Science Program senior associate Rick Piltz announced his resignation, citing disregard of the national assessment as one example of what he perceived as the administration's attempts to muzzle climate-change scientists.

Jacobs is also working on the new reports.

"I think there's value to what is being discussed in those 21 products," she said.

"But it is a very different process."