
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

OCTOBER 12, 2007

Nobel Peace Prize choice buoys Inland forces opposing global warming

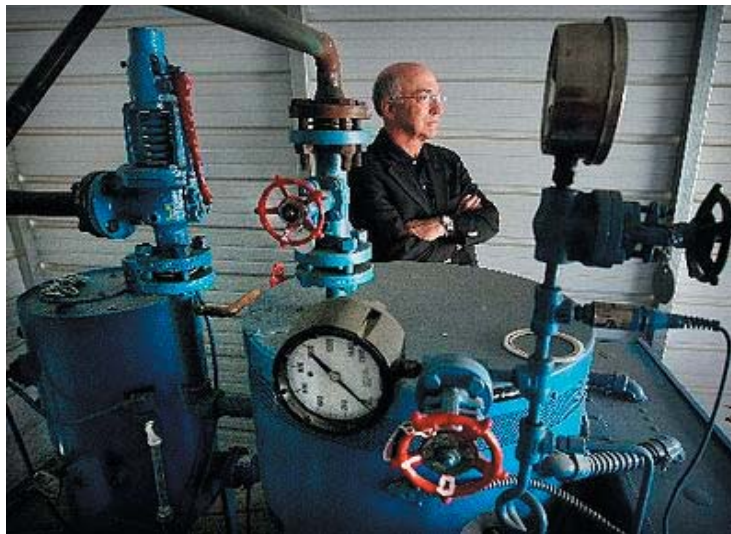
By **JENNIFER BOWLES**
The Press-Enterprise

Kassie Siegel first argued to the federal government that global warming was helping to push a species toward extinction back in 2001, the same year the environmental lawyer moved to Idyllwild.

Since then, Siegel has filed petitions with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to get endangered-species protections for polar bears and penguins even as their icy habitats melt before them.

Siegel and Inland scientists who have long pushed for recognition of global warming felt a sense of validation Friday when the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to former Vice President Al Gore and to a United Nations panel of scientists studying the subject. They said the prize caps a year when climate change has come to the forefront, and they hope the acknowledgement will help spur action to prevent the dire consequences that many scientists have predicted.

"I think it's wonderful. It's reflective of the fact that the climate crisis is the greatest societal challenge that



UCR professor Charles Wyman studies renewable energy. "Climate change is not something we can fix after it's too late," he said.

David Bauman / The Press-Enterprise

we face today," said Siegel, who now lives in Joshua Tree and works for the Center for Biological Diversity, a nonprofit group.

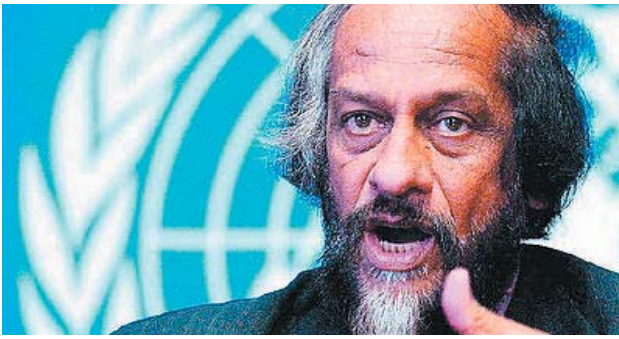
Siegel will testify before Congress on Wednesday on the polar bears' situation. Since she filed a petition for the furry arctic animals in 2005, the federal government has agreed to consider listing them as a species threatened with extinction.

A recent study by the U.S. Geological Survey found that further reduction in Arctic sea ice could result in the loss of two-thirds of the world's polar bear population within 50 years. The bears depend on sea ice as a platform to hunt seals, their primary food.

Though the Nobel committee didn't render a scientific conclusion on global warming, Monty Hempel said the panel should be applauded for taking up the issue of global warming as an issue related to peace.

"It's an interesting step for the Nobel committee to try to expand the sense of what peace requires. It's not just the absences of war. Peace really does involve a stable climate," said Hempel, director of the University of Redlands' Center for Environmental Studies.

"We don't seem to worry nearly enough about the things that undermine our food source, energy and transportation systems. If you don't have those working for you,



Rajendra Pachauri is chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which shares the prize.

you may not have to worry about what terrorists can do.”

Hempel was among those who dined with Gore last fall before the former vice president spoke on the Redlands campus. The two share the same mentor, the late Roger Revelle, who was among the first scientists to prove that carbon dioxide was increasing in the atmosphere.

Mike Allen, director of UC Riverside’s Center for Conservation Biology, said having the Nobel Peace Prize bestowed on a subject he has studied for more than 40 years is more than exciting.

“I’m certainly really thrilled about it. There’s no such thing as a Nobel Prize for environment or ecology, and there’s really not been any acknowledgment of this importance before,” Allen said.

Sam Huang, a former RCC biology professor and Riverside artist whose work depicts global- warming consequences, credited Gore with spreading the message widely with his documentary, “An Inconvenient Truth,” which also won an Academy Award earlier this year.

“I’m just greatly delighted with what has happened within a year, and it’s primarily due to Al Gore and his efforts and explaining in a layman’s way so it (global warming) can be understandable,” Huang said.

Siegel and others said the prize should spark more action on the part of governments.

“Global climate change is not something we can fix after it’s too late,” said Charles Wyman, a UC Riverside professor of chemistry and environmental engineering. “We have to be forward thinking and take action while we still can.”

Wyman, who is developing ethanol to power vehicles instead of carbon dioxide-producing gasoline, said global warming wasn’t very widely talked about back when he started working on renewable energy sources in the late 1970s.

“I remember, back then, we talked about it and the need to do something about it,” he said, “but most of the world wasn’t doing anything.”