

SUE, SARAH, SUE

May 27, 2008 -- The polar bears are doing just fine, thank you very much.

So says Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, who announced last week that her state would sue to block Washington from listing the animals as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act.

And it's a good thing, too - because the new bear-population protections mask what may be the most serious threat to American economic might in decades.

Yes, polar bears.

The polar bear, you see, marks the first species on the "threatened" list whose supposed predicament is linked directly to global warming.

The current Alaskan polar-bear population may be near an all-time high.

But Interior Department computer models - such as they are - project widespread melting of the polar ice the bears need to hunt.

And that's a big problem, given the near-limitless powers embedded in the Endangered Species Act.

The act, for one, *requires* the department to ensure that "all actions authorized, funded or carried out" by all federal agencies aren't likely to "result in the . . . adverse modification of habitat" of listed species.

This was odious enough when the presence of a few worthless snail darters was sufficient to derail massive public-works projects.

But because polar bears are now imperiled by *global* warming (officially, anyway), *any* carbon emissions *anywhere* in the country could conceivably be judged an illegal threat to their habitat.

And far-left green outfits like the Center for Biological Diversity - the group that led the charge to get the polar bear listed in the first place - are already licking their lips at the prospect.

Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne, of course, has promised a measured application of the new protections.

Problem is, that might not be his call. As George F. Will pointed out in these pages last week, the door is now open for a federal judge to use polar-bear safety to attempt to manage nearly the entire US economy.

Not that such concerns will prevent the eco-lobby from smearing Palin as a bear-murdering meanie.

But the fact remains that any move to reduce US carbon emissions must be seriously and deliberately weighed against its economic costs.

And that's a job for the elected representatives of the people - not an unaccountable gaggle of judges and bureaucrats who, in the end, answer only to their own prejudices.

Thus, we wish Gov. Palin the best.