

Bad news for polar bears

[Nine new studies](#) released today from the U.S. Geological Survey predict serious declines in polar bear populations as summer sea ice continues to shrink. It's grim (see the [USGS summary here](#)).

Here's the response from the [Center for Biological Diversity](#):

A new USGS study has concluded that two-thirds of the world's polar bears will disappear by the middle of this century. Polar bears will also disappear entirely from Alaska during this same time period. The study is based on "middle of the road" climate projections, which do not account for the more rapid rate of warming actually observed.

As of September 3, 2007, sea ice extent had fallen to 1.70 million square miles -- fully 350,000 square miles below the previous record low of 2.05 million square miles in September, 2005, according to the National Snow and Ice Data Center.

(This paragraph has been changed -- CBD sent out a later press release correcting the area.)

"This grim news about polar bears and sea ice decline is horrifying, but it is a call to action, not despair," said Kassie Siegel, Climate, Air, and Energy Program for the Center for Biological Diversity, and author of the Petition to list the Polar Bear under the Endangered Species Act, submitted in February, 2005.

And Washington's Rep. Jay Inslee, member of the House Natural Resources Committee, House Energy and Commerce Committee, and House Select Committee on Global Warming, weighs in:

"We knew the sea ice on which polar bears depend has been disappearing, but these studies bring new urgency to [listing the polar bear on the Endangered Species List](#) and taking bold action to save habitat by cutting greenhouse-gas emissions... These reports should be a wake up call to members of Congress and the administration who are dragging their feet on aggressive proposals to tackle climate change."

So when exactly does global warming take front-and-center in the race for president (see [these energy interviews](#) with the candidates on Grist)

Posted by [Lisa Stiffler](#) at September 7, 2007 3:35 p.m.