

Dateline Earth([environmental blog](#))

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Muzzling discussion of polar bears

Officials with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have snapped one of those metal bear traps on unapproved discussions of "polar bears, sea ice and climate change" for FWS folks traveling internationally.

In short, the worker bees must leave the talking to someone who is officially sanctioned to do so.

We received the tip from **Kieran Suckling with the Center for Biological Diversity**, which is [supporting the listing](#) of polar bears as an endangered species. Check out this [FWS polar bear 1](#)" notice and this [FWS polar bear 2](#)" notice sent from the regional office in Alaska to the director of Fish and Wildlife stating that workers will not comment on these issues. In one case "an official representative" from the department will travel with the worker and is allowed to speak on the topics, someone who "is knowledgeable on the administration's position on climate change and related issues."

The driving need for all of this control is as fuzzy to me as a polar bear's behind. After all, the Bush administration has already put its support behind endangered species protection for the bears.

From the [Washington Post's Juliet Eilperin's December 2006 story](#):

The Bush administration has decided to propose listing the polar bear as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, putting the U.S. government on record as saying that global warming could drive one of the world's most recognizable animals out of existence.

The administration's proposal -- which was described by an Interior Department official who spoke on the condition of anonymity -- stems from the fact that rising temperatures in the Arctic are shrinking the sea ice that polar bears need for hunting. The official insisted on anonymity because the department will submit the proposal today for publication in the Federal Register, after which it will be subject to public comment for 90 days.