

## OP-ED

### Species protection dooms development

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COMMENT

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I'd like to anticipate the new year's unfolding economic events with excitement and optimism, but uneasiness better describes my mind-set. Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne will announce a decision Wednesday on whether to list the polar bear as "endangered." Assuming it's a "yes," executives of the Center for Biological Diversity, the Natural Resources Defense Council and Greenpeace, whose lawsuit forced the issue, will likely celebrate in grand style, albeit at our expense. If it's a "no," other species are at the ready to help stop "climate change."

The CBD explains the strategy:

"Protection under the Endangered Species Act will provide concrete help to polar bears and could revolutionize American climate policy. ... The polar bear's protected status will require a new level of environmental review before oil and gas development continue in polar bear habitat in the American Arctic. Even more critically, because it is illegal to harm threatened species or jeopardize their survival, the polar bear listing could mean that all U.S. industries emitting large quantities of greenhouse gases -- and requiring a federal permit to do so -- will come under the purview of the Endangered Species Act. From polluting power plants in the Midwest to auto manufacturers, a vast array of industries may have to clean up their acts to give the polar bear a chance to survive."

Meanwhile, many Alaska families and businesses live each day unaware that the mechanics of a listing could drag our economy into recession. They may not realize polar bears will continue to thrive, with or without an endangered label, as they have during repeated warm cycles over thousands of centuries. As you can see, it's not about polar bears.

Then there's mining. Jan. 15 is the deadline for citizen initiative sponsors to collect enough signatures to place several deceptive anti-mining measures on next fall's election ballots. Entitled "Alaska Clean Water" but more honestly described as "Kill Alaska Mining," the measures would be moot if the Legislature caves in to special interest demands and imposes similar legal roadblocks. These proposed mandates will not only create impossible hurdles for mining projects, but would greatly increase the costs of local government services and general commercial activities.

Alaska's economy may be teetering on the brink. Yet we have to question how many government workers, real-estate agents, teachers, doctors, sales clerks and others comprising the state's service sector thoughtlessly signed the "Alaska Clean Water" petitions. Many of the same people seldom bother to vote and are oblivious to the fact that, when natural resource jobs go away, so will theirs -- and their property values as well.

There is too much at stake in these issues to sit on the sidelines. To protect and grow our economy we need advocates with "fire in their bellies." We don't need more people who contribute little or nothing to their communities and expect government to take care of them, in true socialist style. We need spirited, dedicated Alaskans like the courageous, independent people who fought for statehood and self-reliance here in the Last Frontier. We need the unsung heroes whose lives and principles reflected an unwavering sense of duty, perseverance and integrity. Sometimes I fear they've been replaced by an army of educated elitists whose sensibilities are offended by digging for minerals and oil and gas, and by hunting and cutting trees, especially here.

Today, "global warming" has made Alaska's energy development the elephant in the room, as state climate change committees consider emission reduction measures that could jeopardize the industry's future development. People need to pay attention to the process.

Fortunately, the media are finally beginning to see through the alleged man-made carbon dioxide emissions "consensus." Be sure to read the Jan. 1 New York Times article "In 2008 a 100 Percent Chance of Alarm," by John Tierney at

/tinyurl.com/yp8wo3. Everything under the sun isn't caused by global warming, and snake oil isn't sold only at carnivals, as British engineering professor John Brignell shows on his Numberwatch Web site ([tinyurl.com/f4xnr](http://tinyurl.com/f4xnr)). It provides links to media reports of more than 600 outlandish global warming claims. You decide their legitimacy.

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