

## Polar bears get no love. Seals? Maybe.

By Kat Kerlin

| [katk@newsreview.com](mailto:katk@newsreview.com)

While the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service drags its feet on a petition to list the **polar bear** as a threatened or **endangered species**, the agency is now considering listing certain members of its prey—**ice seals**.

The **National Marine Fisheries Service** is reviewing four species of ice seals: ribbon, ringed, spotted and bearded seals, who are losing habitat as sea ice recedes.

Meanwhile, the **USFWS** was expected to announce a recommendation whether to list polar bears as threatened by Jan. 9—about **three months ago**.

In September, the **U.S. Geological Survey** reported “Future reduction of sea ice in the Arctic could result in a loss of **two-thirds** of the world’s polar bear population within 50 years, according to a series of studies released [in September].”

Last year, summer sea ice in the Arctic shrank to about 1.65 million square miles, the lowest level in 38 years of satellite record-keeping, according to the Associated Press.

The **Center for Biological Diversity** submitted the original petition to list the polar bear in Feb. 2005. This March, that group and others sued Fish and Wildlife for its sluggishness. The groups say the **Bush Administration** is intentionally delaying the polar bear decision. To list the polar bear—or the ice seal, for that matter—as threatened or endangered would trigger a recovery plan that could affect **oil and natural gas** leases in the species’ habitats, as well as require the government to address the causes of global warming.

In the past **seven years**, George W. Bush’s administration has placed 59 domestic species on the endangered list, according to the Washington Post. His father, George H.W. Bush, and Bill Clinton each placed an average of 58 and 62 species, respectively, on the list **each year** they were in office.