



Constructive Critical-ism

Feds will designate critical habitat for polar bears

Posted at 10:33 AM on 07 Oct 2008



The U.S. government will designate critical habitat for polar bears off Alaska's coast as part of a partial settlement of a lawsuit brought by Greenpeace, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Center for Biological Diversity. The Interior Department [declared polar bears a threatened species](#) in May, but neglected to make any stipulations for habitat protection. "You can't protect a species without protecting the place where it lives," says CBD's [Kassie Siegel](#), adding, "After global warming, oil development is the biggest threat to polar bears." Federal

law prohibits actions that "destroy or adversely modify" designated critical habitat, which would seem to include offshore oil and gas drilling -- though with GOP vice prez candidate Sarah Palin touting "safe, environmentally friendly drilling offshore," one never can be certain. After a rule proposal, public comment, and public hearings, the finalized critical-habitat designation must be in place by June 30, 2010. And the one remaining polar bear will no doubt appreciate it.

sources: [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#), [Center for Biological Diversity](#), [McClatchy](#)

see other polar bear lawsuits, in Grist:

- [Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin sues, arguing polar bears doing fine](#)
- [Green groups sue, arguing polar bears should be listed as endangered](#)
- [Industry groups sue, arguing Alaska biz unfairly singled out](#)

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Grist Magazine: Environmental News and Commentary

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