

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

December 14, 2010

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
18th and C Streets, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: Listing the Polar Bear as an Endangered Species

Dear Secretary Salazar,

On behalf of our organizations which collectively represent millions of Americans who support strong action by the administration in response to climate change, and who care deeply about the polar bear, other species, and communities across the globe that are already suffering from the rapid warming of the Arctic and our planet, we urge you to use the opportunity provided by a recent court ruling in the polar bear Endangered Species Act litigation to acknowledge the best available climate science and give polar bears the higher level of “endangered” status that they need and deserve under the law.

In 2008, the Bush administration listed the polar bear as a “threatened” species. Listing as “threatened,” rather than as “endangered,” allowed the administration to issue a regulation reducing the protections the polar bear would otherwise receive, most notably to exempt the primary threat facing the bear, greenhouse gas pollution, from some important regulatory programs under the Act.

You have defended both the decision to deny the polar bear “endangered” status as well as the exemption for greenhouse gas pollution in court. This is in the face of scientific projections showing an overwhelming risk of extinction for two-thirds of the world’s polar bears, including all the bears in Alaska, by 2050, with a substantial risk that these bears could disappear within the next 10-20 years.

The significance of Arctic sea ice loss extends far beyond the plight of the polar bear. The rapid and accelerating sea ice melt is part of an important climate feedback hastening further warming and melting of the land-based Greenland ice sheet, contributing to rising sea levels. Without deep and rapid greenhouse pollution reductions, the loss of the Arctic sea ice ecosystem will not only drive the polar bear extinct but will greatly exacerbate climate damages around the world. The World Health Organization estimated that as of the year 2000, 150,000 people per year were already dying due to global climate change. The Global Humanitarian Forum increased this number to over 300,000 people in 2009. The pollution reductions necessary to protect the Arctic sea ice are thus needed to avert some of the worst impacts for the rest of the world as well.

In a November 4, 2010 ruling in the ongoing litigation relating to the polar bear, Judge Emmet Sullivan remanded the polar bear decision to your agency to provide additional

explanation for the legal basis of its listing determination by December 23rd, 2010, and to take such further action as appropriate in light of the Court's ruling. We request that you break with the flawed findings which deny and downplay the risks facing polar bears and the Arctic ecosystem, fully acknowledge the reality and science of climate change in the Arctic, and grant polar bears full protection as an "endangered" species.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent issue.

Yours Sincerely,

350.org

Alameda Creek Alliance

Alaska Coalition of Washington

Alaska Wilderness League

All-Creatures.org

Alliance for Wild Rockies

Animal Welfare Institute

Animas Valley Institute

Antelope Valley Conservancy

Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment

American University Washington College of Law Environmental Program

Battle Creek Alliance

Biodiversity Conservation Alliance

Borneo Project

Buckeye Forest Council

CA Otomi Coordination Project

California Student Sustainability Coalition (CSSC)

Californians for Western Wilderness

Canary Coalition

Cascadia Wildlands

CBF Voices

Center for a Sustainable Coast

Center for Biological Diversity

Center for Native Ecosystems

Central New Mexico Audubon Society

Chesapeake Climate Action Network

Christians Caring for Creation

Church of Earth Healing

Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge

Clean Air Carolina

Climate Protection Campaign

Climate Science Watch

Coal River Mountain Watch

Colorado Grizzly Project

Community Environmental Council

Conservation Law Foundation

Conservation Northwest

Corporate Ethics International
CREDO
Czech Climate Coalition
Do the Right Thing Now
Earth Day Network
East Ozarks Audubon Society
Eco-Eating
Eco-Justice Collaborative
Education for Global Warming Solutions
Elisha Mitchell Audubon Society
Endangered Habitats League
Endangered Species Coalition
Energy Justice Network
EPIC - the Environmental Protection Information Center
EPP - LCA. Org
Food Empowerment Project
Fresno Metro Ministry
Friends of Merrymeeting Bay
Friends of the Earth
Friends of Upper Delaware River
Friends of Whitehaven Park
Fund for Wild Nature
Gallaudet Swim Club
Georgia Conservancy
Global Green USA
Global Warming Education Network
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Green for All
Green Party of New York State
Green Peace Corps
Green Sanctuary Committee
Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice
Greenpeace
Halifax River Audubon
Independent Environmental Conservation & Activism Network
Institute for Policy Studies
Institute for Social Ecology
International Society for the Preservation of the Tropical Rainforest
International Fund for Animal Welfare
Interfaith Power & Light
Kids vs Global Warming
Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center
KyotoUSA
La Purisima Audubon Society
Latinos United for Clean Air
Malama Kaua`i

Massachusetts Forest Watch
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
Montana Audubon
NC WARN: North Carolina Waste Awareness and Reduction Network
Nebraska Wildlife Rehab., Inc.
Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility
Occidental Arts and Ecology Center
Office of Justice, Peace, & Integrity of Creation for the School Sisters of Notre Dame, St.
Louis Province
Ocean Conservation Research
One More Generation
Oregon Environmental Council
Oregon Wild
Pacifica Beach Coalition
Pacifica Climate Committee
Pacifica Shorebird Alliance
Pacifica's Environmental Family
Pegasus Foundation
Post Carbon Institute
Public Citizen Energy Program
Rainforest Action Network
Redwood Alliance Climate Action Project
Republicans for Environmental Protection
Restore: The North Woods
Salmon Protection and Watershed Network SPAWN
San Joaquin Et Al
Save Lake Superior Association
Save Our Sky Blue Waters
Save the Frogs
SaveNature.org
Save Union County
Sea Turtle Conservancy
Sequoia Audubon Society
Sierra Club
Siskiyou Project
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy
Stewards of the Earth
Taiwan Environmental Protection Union
The Center for the Celebration of Creation
The Climate Project
The Clinch Coalition
The Interfaith Council for the Protection of Animals and Nature
The Orange County Interfaith Coalition for the Environment
The Wild Classroom
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Unitarian Universalists Association of Congregations

Unitarian Universalists Environmental Justice Program
Unitarian Universalists Ministry for Earth
Unitarian Universalists United Nations Office
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Roots: Green Youth Art and Media Center
University of Denver Environmental Law Clinic
UU Church - Green Sanctuary Committee
Western Nebraska Resources Council
Western Wildlife Conservancy
Wild Equity Institute
Wild Nature Institute
WildEarth Guardians
Wildlife Alliance of Maine
Wyoming Children's Museum and Nature Center