



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: March 9, 2004

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SENATOR MCCAIN ASKS GAO TO DETERMINE IMPACTS OF GLOBAL WARMING ON FEDERALLY MANAGED LAND

Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Ernest Hollings (D-SC), Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, joined to request that the General Accounting Office (GAO) prepare a comprehensive assessment of the effects of global warming on our nation's federally managed land.

Prompted by a request from Bluewater Network, a San Francisco-based environmental nonprofit organization, Senators McCain and Hollings asked the GAO to identify the losses and stresses on all of America's public lands (including coastal and ocean resources) that will result from global warming. The GAO report would inventory the impacts of global warming and predict the timing of their environmental and socio-economic consequences. In addition, the Senators are asking the GAO to identify the resources that can be saved by adaptive measures such as construction of sea walls to protect coastal lands, and improved networks of reserves to protect species.

Since issuing its 2002 Scorched Earth Report, detailing the impacts of global warming on public lands, Bluewater Network has urged the Federal government to take action to protect public lands from global warming's impacts. Bluewater's Scorched Earth Report was lauded by top climate scientists and public officials, including Sen. Boxer (D-CA) and Rep. George Miller (D-CA). "Our public lands are literally melting, burning and drying up. Congress needs an assessment in order to responsibly manage these treasured lands," said Leslie Caplan, attorney and Global Warming Campaign Manager at Bluewater Network.

In 1990, Congress envisioned that the US Global Change Research Program would prepare comprehensive assessments of the effects of global warming every four years. Although the Program completed an assessment four years ago, no update is currently planned, despite the fact that the scientific community's understanding of the serious consequences of global warming has improved considerably in the last few years. Northern California Congressman George Miller (D-7th) commented that: "Unless we act soon, global warming will have a dramatic negative impact on our public lands as well as our health and the economy. I am very glad that Sens. McCain and Hollings have taken a lead role in bringing national attention and resources to this growing problem. The federal government needs to be an active part of the solution, and this comprehensive study is an important step in the right direction."

Global warming, a direct consequence of industrialization, threatens cherished public lands nationwide. With predicted temperature increase of up to 10 degrees Fahrenheit over the next 100 years, glaciers in protected parks will melt away, coastal wetlands, including the Florida Everglades, will be flooded, and droughts and fires will devastate our nation's forests. These dramatic ecological changes will catastrophically affect plant and animal species and could be the death knell for struggling species like the Florida panther.

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