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**NEW SCIENTIFIC CONSENSUS:  
ARCTIC IS WARMING AT UNPRECEDENTED RATE, BURNING OF FOSSIL  
FUELS IS CULPRIT**

**ICE MELT TO ACCELERATE WARMING, CAUSE SEA LEVEL RISE DANGEROUS TO  
COASTAL STATES; PRESSURE ON U.S. TO ACT**

WASHINGTON, D.C. (November 8, 2004) -- The Arctic is warming rapidly, with the loss of polar ice projected to accelerate global warming as well as contribute to sea level rise and flooding, according to a comprehensive four-year scientific study of the region conducted by an international team of 300 scientists that was officially released today.

According to the scientists' most conservative estimates, about half the summer sea ice in the Arctic is projected to melt by the end of this century, along with a significant portion of the Greenland Ice Sheet, as the region warms an additional 7 to 13 degrees F by 2100. Rising sea levels are already observed and are predicted to accelerate as warming continues, according to the final report of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA).

The study confirms that the warming is human-caused, through heat-trapping emissions from the burning of fossil fuels. The United States is the largest world contributor of those emissions, yet has failed to enact limits.

The report comes out at a time of increasing pressure on the Bush administration to enact U.S. emissions reductions. During election week, the Queen of England privately pressured UK Prime Minister Tony Blair to press the U.S. on global warming policy, and she opened a "climate change summit" of senior government officials from the UK and Germany to discuss the problem. Russian president Vladimir Putin signed the Kyoto Protocol, thus bringing the accord into effect worldwide.

"President Bush needs to change his approach to global warming in light of the damage already being seen in the Arctic," said Dr. Daniel Lashof, Science Director of the NRDC Climate Center. "It is now clear we have to cut the pollution that causes global warming to prevent dangerous changes in the climate. The purely voluntary approach taken in the President's first term will leave the nation and the world in great danger from the threat of global warming."

The assessment was commissioned by the Arctic Council, a ministerial intergovernmental forum comprised of eight nations, including the United States, and six Indigenous Peoples organizations; and the International Arctic Science Committee, an international scientific organization appointed by

18 national academies of science. The assessment's findings and projections are being released today and will be presented in detail at a scientific symposium in Reykjavik, Iceland starting tomorrow.

"The impacts of global warming are apparent now in the Arctic," said Robert Corell, chair of the ACIA. "The Arctic is experiencing some of the most rapid and severe impacts on earth. The impacts of global warming on the region and the globe are projected to increase substantially in the years to come."

Additional findings include:

- In Alaska, Western Canada, and Eastern Russia average winter temperatures have increased as much as 4 to 7 degrees F in the past 50 years, and are projected to rise 7-14 degrees F over the next 100 years.
- Polar sea ice during the summer is projected to decline by 50 percent by the end of this century with some models showing near-complete disappearance of summer sea ice. This is very likely to have devastating consequences for polar bears, ice-living seals, and local people for whom these animals are a primary food source. At the same time, reduced sea ice extent is likely to increase marine access to some of the region's resources.
- Warming over Greenland will lead to substantial melting of the Greenland Ice Sheet, contributing to global sea-level rise at an increasing rate. Greenland's ice sheets contain enough water to eventually raise sea level by about 23 feet.
- In the United States, low-lying coastal states like Florida and Louisiana are particularly susceptible to rising sea levels.
- Should the Arctic Ocean become ice-free in summer, it is likely that polar bears and some seal species would be driven to extinction.
- Arctic climate changes present serious challenges to the health and food security of some Indigenous Peoples, challenging the survival of some cultures.
- Over the next 100 years, global warming is expected to accelerate, contributing to major physical, ecological, social, and economic changes, and the Assessment has documented that many of these changes have already begun.

The assessment's projections are based on a moderate estimate of future emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, and incorporate results from five major global climate models used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment was formally initiated in 2000 at the Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council at Point Barrow, Alaska as a joint project between the Arctic Council and the International Arctic Science Committee. As specified in the Barrow Declaration, the goal of the ACIA is to "evaluate and synthesize knowledge on climate variability and change and increased ultraviolet radiation, and support policy-making processes and the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change." The Arctic Council directed ACIA to address "environmental, human health, social, cultural, and economic impacts and consequences, including policy recommendations."

**B-Roll available by satellite:**

**FIRST FEED:**

Date: **Monday, November 8, 2004**

**Time:13:30-13:45 ET**  
**Satellite: IA 6, Transponder 16**  
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**Orbital position: 93 Degrees W**  
**Downlink Polarity: Horizontal**  
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**SECOND FEED:**

**Date: Monday, November 8, 2004**  
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**Satellite: IA 6, Transponder 16**  
**Satellite type: C band**  
**Orbital position: 93 Degrees W**  
**Downlink Polarity: Horizontal**  
**Downlink Frequency: 4020**  
**Audio: 6.2/6.8**

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The Natural Resources Defense Council is a national, nonprofit organization of scientists, lawyers and environmental specialists dedicated to protecting public health and the environment. Founded in 1970, NRDC has more than 1 million members and e-activists nationwide, served from offices in New York, Washington, Santa Monica and San Francisco.