

Governor 'Stays the Course', Again

State of Alaska Marine Mammal
Scientists Support Federal Polar Bear Threat Conclusions, But Palin
Administration Refuses to Release Their Scientific Review
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As a court-ordered deadline approaches this Thursday for the federal government to rule on whether to list the polar bear as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act, the State of Alaska yesterday announced its final refusal to publicly release its expert scientific analysis of the proposed federal listing. However, in e-mails the state did release yesterday, it is clear that state marine mammal biologists agreed with federal studies last fall that concluded that 2/3 of the world's polar bears "would likely be extirpated by mid-century" due to loss of sea ice, including all those off Alaska.

After months of attempts by a public interest requestor to obtain the scientific analysis done by the State of Alaska's marine mammal biologists on the proposed federal rule to protect polar bears, the state informed the requestor this week that the analysis will not be released. The Governor opposes the federal listing and says her decision was based on science. But that the administration will not release the scientific review of the proposed listing supports the suspicions of many that the Governor's decision was a political one contrary to the expert scientific recommendations of state biologists.

The decision released late yesterday from ADFG came after review by the Alaska Dept. of Law, was to not release the professional review on the federal proposed polar bear listing by the state's top experts on the matter - the marine mammal staff at ADFG.

"It is perfectly clear that the only reason for the state's decision to withhold this information from the public is that it contradicts the final decision made by the Governor to oppose a federal listing. Otherwise, they would surely have wanted their scientific support out in the public. Thus, the Governor's claim that her decision was made on science and not politics rings hollow. So much for our supposed new era of government transparency", said Rick Steiner, who had requested the information.

However, even though they decided not release the actual scientific reviews, an e-mail they did release dated 10/09/07 e-mail from the marine mammal staff regarding the nine newest federal studies from fall 2007 which extended the comment period for the proposed listing clearly show the state scientists agreed with the federal conclusions, as follows:

"Overall, we believe that the methods and analytical approaches used to examine the currently available information supports the primary conclusions and inferences stated in these 9 (USGS 9/07) reports."

These were the latest federal studies that concluded that 2/3

of the world's polar bears, and all of those off Alaska, would be gone by the middle of this century due to loss of sea ice habitat due to global warming.

"They must have missed that one", said Steiner. "Although the Alaska Attorney General and ADFG decided to conceal the state scientific review of the polar bear listing, there is no longer any doubt what it concludes -- state experts on this issue unequivocally agree with the federal science that polar bears are indeed highly threatened" said Steiner.

"Regardless what anyone feels about the listing of polar bears, the larger issue here may be government honesty and transparency about its policy decision-making process. The people of Alaska paid for this expert scientific review and they deserve to see what they paid for. The Palin administration should be ashamed of this government secrecy."