



PRESS RELEASE

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Sea level projections likely too low, to be worse than predicted

According to the Center's executive director, David Kyler, sea level will rise significantly more than previously predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the international group of scientists that is the official source of such forecasts. He also says other impacts caused by global warming will be more severe than previously forecasted, some of which will also add to warming rates.

On April 6, Kyler spoke to members of the Sierra Club's "coastal group" at the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography on Skidaway Island, east of Savannah. In his remarks, he referred to recent information about several factors that are adding to global warming, indicated by ongoing research worldwide, that have not been included in climate modeling being done by IPCC.

Of particular significance, Kyler noted, is a 2012 report by the United National Environment Program (UNEP), *Policy Implications of Warming Permafrost*. Quoting from the report, he said, "all global climate projections... are biased on the low side relative to global temperature...."

Kyler explained that the UN report makes it clear that computer modeling used as the basis for all IPCC analysis was 'frozen' in 2009 for reports that will be issued in 2013 and 2014.

"By locking down the computer model many years before related assessments are issued, the IPCC has left out some very important research done since 2009," Kyler said. The neglected information, including the UN report on permafrost thaw, has enormous implications for worldwide climate change and a range of impacts – including sea level rise, wildfires, crop loss, extinction of species, and ocean acidification.

Until now, the IPCC has predicted that sea level will rise about three feet (one meter) by 2100. But that forecast was based on very limited analysis of the causes and effects of global warming – primarily the expansion of water volume in the oceans as temperatures rise and cautious, limited assessment of glacier melting.

When taking into account the effects of permafrost thaw, accelerated rate of glacier melting, and rapidly increasing destruction of forests from wildfires, it is probable that future conditions will be far worse, Kyler said.

"Without this crucial information incorporated into the model used to predict climate impacts, the public is being lulled into a false sense of complacency about the issue, and political action needed to reduce the rate of increasing temperatures will be weakened and delayed," he warned.

"By being overly cautious in corroborating global scientific studies, the IPCC is failing to keep decision-makers and the public current on extremely important trends that directly threaten both our economy and environment," Kyler concluded.

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