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NOAA swamped with requests for Arctic information

'A HUGE DISCONNECT': Weather forecasting among the services that fall short.

By RENE SCHOOFF
McClatchy Newspapers
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WASHINGTON -- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is being inundated with requests for weather and ice forecasts as well as navigation information about the Arctic, but isn't able to provide all of the information that the Coast Guard, industries and Alaska Natives need, NOAA chief Jane Lubchenco said on Monday.

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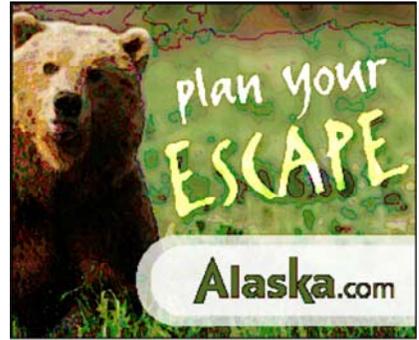
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The NOAA chief, the commandant of the Coast Guard and the chief of naval operations spoke at a symposium about challenges ahead for the U.S. as summer Arctic sea ice declines, opening the Arctic to oil and gas extraction, fisheries, tourism and shipping.

Lubchenco, a marine ecologist, said her agency doesn't have nearly the same capacity for Arctic weather forecasting, oceanography and navigational charting that it has in other regions.

"It's a matter of insufficient observing, insufficient information to do the modeling and forecasting," she said. "So there's a huge disconnect between what is expected we will be able to deliver and what we are actually able to provide."

Lubchenco said NOAA needs more funding for this work, despite current pressure to cut the federal budget.

As the ice retreats, the need for information will increase, she said. She cited needs for weather and sea ice forecasts for the Navy and Coast Guard, Alaska Native communities, shipping companies and the fossil fuel industry, which wants permits for exploration in Arctic Alaska next year.

NOAA also needs better models to be able to show how the loss of sea ice and rising ocean temperatures will affect pollock, cod, salmon and crab, as well as other species such as ice seals and whales, she said.

The commandant of the Coast Guard, Adm. Robert J. Papp Jr., said the Coast Guard doesn't have a base or the ships it would need to respond to a cruise ship in distress or to an oil spill.

Communities in northern Alaska have hotel rooms for only a few dozen people. During last year's oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the Coast Guard needed rooms for 3,000 people. In all, the government sent in 30,000.

"How do you place people up in the Arctic in those conditions is just the start," Papp said. "Then it's pre-staging equipment. It's having facilities you can operate out of. And right now we have nothing."

Papp said new icebreakers would be expensive to build and operate but the U.S. nonetheless needs them.

The country's two heavy icebreakers, Polar Star and Polar Sea, are both out of service. The Polar Star is being decommissioned and the 30-year-old Polar Sea is being refurbished. It's expected to



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return to service in 2013. Another icebreaker, the Coast Guard cutter Healy, is now on an Arctic research mission.

Adm. Gary Roughead, the chief of national operations, said the Navy sees its role expanding as it includes the Arctic in its mission. He noted that 22 percent of oil and gas reserves are thought to be in the Arctic. In addition, new northern shipping routes are expected to open in about 25 years, he said. Lubchenko cautioned that the environmental changes in the Arctic are happening faster than elsewhere and faster than ever observed in history.

NOAA has a responsibility to conduct scientific research that helps make "good stewardship decisions," she said.

"We have relatively little understanding of the true vulnerabilities of most Arctic ecosystems to the kinds of changes that are under way now," she said. "And there's a very urgent need to acquire additional information to be making better decisions." She added that development decisions should be made cautiously, "because of the potential for either irreversible changes or changes that would take a long, long time to undo."

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They seek "information" but are likely to receive only propaganda.

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This is dedicated to the one I love: Saucy
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This is something we have no control over - for those who think that mankind causes or contributes to global warming they have not yet heard Sarah Palin's and Michelle Bachmanns deep rooted scientific analysis of this issue-

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You're being ironic?

06/21/2011 07:36 AM in reply to odb2 1 Like Report Abuse

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"According to satellite altimetry, which is believed to be considerably more reliable than the tide-gages that it has largely replaced, mean global sea level has been rising by approximately 1 ft (0.3 m) per century during the 16 years since the first satellite began measurements. During the past four years, there has been no statistically-significant sea-level rise at all." <http://c3headlines.typepad.com...>

Shhh! Please, no one tell the alarmists! It'll ruin their day.

And whatever you do, don't tell Large Al. (Say, whatever happend to Al? Is he still running, uh, waddling away from debating global "warming?")

06/21/2011 01:07 AM 3 Likes Report Abuse Like Reply



chastity

So, 1 foot per century or .01 foot per year gives us .16 of a foot in 16 years or about 2 inches. And this two inches is destroying our coast and flooding the villages? Really?

06/21/2011 06:26 AM in reply to SophiaMerry 2 Likes Report Abuse Like Reply



WhiteBeard

"And this two inches is destroying our coast and flooding the villages? Really?"

Nope. Kivalina, Newtok and Shishmaref (there are others) get most of the press. They're on barrier islands and their problem is storm erosion ("destroying our coast") because the annual shore fast ice that used to protect their shore is missing for the early part of the storm season. A number of villages (mostly along the Yukon) are susceptible to **flooding** during break-up when ice dams form and the river flow backs-up.

06/21/2011 07:25 AM in reply to chastity 4 Likes Report Abuse Like Reply



northernmariner

A good resource for funding would be to take the funds that run the federal observer program that puts a federal person on every commercial fishing vessel 40 feet or larger starting in 2012, as of right now it is 60 foot vessels and larger, that fish cod pollock crab halibut, sablefish etc.

Do we really need fish cops on every boat to police each boat while they are commercial fishing? These fishing vessels are already required to have two ankle brackets that they are electronically monitored by government agancys. One is an AIS for security reasons and the other is a VMS for government law enforcement purposes. The vessel owners have to pay for these devices that cost thousands of dollars. Just think about it an 18 wheeled semi truck is 60 feet long. I guess that is next all truckers and trucking companys need to pay for a federal officer to drive and live in their truck with them on every haul and the truck owner must pay for the federal officers.

How many ways do they need to police a commercial fishing boat?

This is defintely the federal government in our bed! Government at is finest. Way out of control.

06/20/2011 11:31 PM 5 Likes Report Abuse Like Reply



Swami_Binkinanda

Yes, they do need cops on every single one.

06/21/2011 04:25 PM in reply to northernmariner Report Abuse Like Reply

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