Palin 'Disappointed' By Polar Bear Endangered Listing

Wednesday, 14 May 2008

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/080514.polar_bear_endangered.mp3{/audio}

AP/Jay Barrett/KMXT

The Interior Department declared the polar bear a threatened species today, saying it must be protected because of the decline in Arctic sea ice from global warming. Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne cited dramatic declines in sea ice over the last three decades and projections of continued losses. These declines, he told a news conference, mean the polar bear is a species likely to be in danger of extinction in the near future.

Kempthorne also said, though, that it would be "inappropriate" to use the protection of the bear to reduce greenhouse gases, or to broadly address climate change.

Kempthorne called Governor Sarah Palin this morning to inform her of the decision, and assured her that oil and gas developments are not to blame. Palin was hopeful the ruling wouldn’t hamper oil and gas development in the arctic:

-- (Palin 1 32 sec “… and he’ll remind American’s of that.”)

She held out the possibility that the state may sue to have the determination overturned after Attorney General Talis Colberg reviews the decision.

-- (Palin 2 22
sec “…
that review of the decision progresses.”)

A decision
had been expected early this year, but the Interior Department said it needed more time to work out many of the details, prompting criticism from members of Congress and environmentalists. Environmentalists filed a lawsuit aimed at forcing a decision, and a federal court on April 29 set a May 15 deadline for a decision.

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