

# CLIMATE NEWS

From Sheldon Whitehouse, Barbara Boxer, and Jeff Merkley

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## Borrowed Time on Disappearing Land



The second IPCC installment published this month again concludes that global sea levels could rise more than three feet by 2100. Such a rise in global sea levels will be uneven, so predicting its outcome in any one place is difficult. But island nations like the Maldives, Kiribati and Fiji may lose much of their land area, and millions of Bangladeshis will be displaced. River deltas around the globe are particularly vulnerable to the effects of rising seas, and wealthier cities like London, Venice, and New Orleans also face uncertain futures. But it is the poorest countries with the biggest populations that will be hit hardest, and none more so than Bangladesh, one of the most densely populated nations in the world. In the Ganges Delta, made up of 230 major rivers and streams, 160 million people live in a place one-fifth the size of France. The country's climate scientists and politicians have come to agree that by 2050, rising sea levels will inundate some 17 percent of the land and displace about 18 million people. Bangladeshis have already started to move away from the lowest-lying villages in the river deltas of the Bay of Bengal, and more migration is expected. (*New York Times*)

## New United Nations Report Warns of Dire Consequences

The world is not ready for the effects of climate change—including more extreme weather—and the likelihood that populated parts of the planet could be rendered uninhabitable, says the leading body of climate scientists in a new Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report called *Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*. The 772 scientists who wrote and edited the IPCC report argue that the world is already experiencing the consequences of climate change, and world leaders have only a few years left to reduce carbon emissions enough to avoid catastrophic warming. The report warns that, even at the lower end of predictions, “Climate change will lead to increased frequency, intensity and/or duration of extreme weather events such as heavy rainfall, warm spells and heat events, drought, intense storm surges and associated sea-level rise.” According to the report, these climatic changes will dramatically disrupt human life and natural ecosystems. (*National Geographic*)

## Iditarod Trail Invitational may be Threatened by Climate Change

With 35 pounds of gear on their bikes, competitors in the Iditarod Trail Invitational in Alaska race along a 1,000-mile course as frigid and isolated as anywhere in the world. During the race, temperatures usually hover in the low 20 degrees (Fahrenheit), but this year they topped 60 degrees. Sections of trail that have been buried under chest-high snowbanks were entirely bare. Dr. John Walsh, a climate scientist with the International Arctic Research Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, cautioned against linking any unusual weather event directly to climate change. However, he acknowledged that the racecourse had been affected. “There is no smoking gun, but this 15 degrees above average in January was really exceptional,” Walsh said. “There was low snow, plus a lot more melt that left the trail conditions really iffy.” Dr. Kevin Trenberth, senior climate scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, CO, said he believed the unusual weather was part of a broader climate shift. “It was extremely warm on the North Pole,” Trenberth said. “Alaska is already seeing many signs of climate change and will be profoundly affected.” (*New York Times*)

## Climate Change to Disrupt Coffee Prices

Climate change could be leading us towards more expensive coffee. A perfect storm of rising heat, extreme weather and ferocious pests means the coffee bean is running out of cool mountainsides on which it flourishes. “The rise in global temperature is of great concern for us in the coffee industry because it will—and has already started—putting the supply of quality coffee at great risk,” said Dr. Tim Schilling, executive director of the World Coffee Research program, based at Texas A&M University. “It is also obvious that increasing temperatures—as well as extreme weather events—have a very negative effect on production. Over the long term, you will definitely see coffee prices going up as a result of climate change.” Assessing all of the combined effects of climate change, Galindo said, “In the worst-case scenario, we will only have a few places producing coffee.” Brazil, Vietnam, Indonesia, Columbia, and Ethiopia are the biggest producers and will probably have the resources to attempt to adapt, he said. “But central America and Laos and Peru and Burundi and Rwanda, they are gone.” (*The Guardian*)