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Global Warming Link to Drowned Polar Bears Melts Under Searing Fed Probe

by Audrey Hudson (more by this author)

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Polar bears drowning in an Alaskan sea because the ice packs are melting—it's the iconic image of the global warming debate.

But the validity of the science behind the image—presented as an ignoble testament to our environment in peril by Al Gore in his film *An Inconvenient Truth*—is now part of a federal investigation that has the

environmental community on edge.

Special agents from the Interior Department's inspector general's office are questioning the two government scientists about the paper they wrote on drowned polar bears, suggesting mistakes were made in the math and as to how the bears actually died, and the department is eyeing another study currently underway on bear populations.

Biologist Charles Monnett, the lead scientist on the paper, was placed on administrative leave July 18. Fellow biologist Jeffrey Gleason, who also contributed to the study, is being questioned, but has not been suspended.

The disputed paper was published by the journal *Polar Biology* in 2006, and suggests that the “drowning-related deaths of polar bears may increase in the future if the observed trend of regression of pack ice and/or longer open-water periods continues.”

It galvanized the environmental movement that led to the bear's controversial listing in 2008 as threatened, and it is now protected under the Endangered Species Act.

Although the four dead bears cited in the paper were observed from 1,500 feet during flights over the Beaufort Sea, and the carcasses were never recovered or examined, Gleason told investigators it is likely the creatures drowned in a sudden windstorm that produced 30-knot winds, not for lack of an ice pack.

"We never mentioned global warming in the paper," Gleason told the investigators, according to the transcript.

"But it's inferred," responded investigator Eric May. "That's why the world took it up as a global warming tangent."

Gleason told investigators that reaction to his and Monnett's paper was overblown and spun out of context.

"I think these sorts of things tend to mushroom, and the interpretation gets popularized," Gleason said. "Something very small turns into this big snowball coming down the mountain, and that's, I think, what happened with this paper."

Gleason concedes that the study had a major impact on the controversial listing of the bear as an endangered species because of global warming.

"As a side note, talking about my former supervisor, he actually sent me an e-mail at one point saying, 'You're the reason polar bears got listed,'" Gleason said.

Monnett now manages \$50 million in studies as part of his duties as a wildlife biologist with the Interior Department's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement.

Investigators are also examining Monnet's procurement of one of those research studies on polar bears conducted by Canada's University of Alberta, as well as the "disclosure of personal relationships and preparation of the scope of work," according to a July 29 memo from the Interior Department's inspector general's

office.

In particular, investigators are asking questions about the peer review work on Monnett's drowned polar bear paper, which was done by his wife, Lisa Rotterman, as well as Andrew Derocher, the lead researcher on the Canadian study under review by the inspector general's office.

Monnett is being legally defended by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), which posted the interviews the inspector general's office conducted with both scientists on its website.

PEER calls Monnett's work "groundbreaking research," and says the investigation is a political attempt to "impugn his observations on polar bears' vulnerability to retreating sea ice."

"With each interview, it becomes more outrageous that government funds are being spent on this crackpot probe while paying Dr. Monnett's salary to sit at home," said Jeff Ruch, executive director of PEER.

"This seven-page paper, which had undergone internal peer review, management review and outside peer review coordinated by journal editors, galvanized scientific and public appreciation for the profound effects that climate change may already be having in the Arctic," PEER said in another statement in support of Monnett.

Eric Holder's Justice Department has already declined to pursue any criminal prosecution in the probe, but the scientists still face possible administrative action for any wrongdoing, the inspector general said in the memo.

With investigators suggesting his research is collapsing, Monnett was defensive in the interview, and asked for the inspectors' credentials to question his work or second-guess his calculations.

For example, there was some confusion as to whether it was three or four dead bears used in the calculation to determine the ratio of survival, and whether Monnett assumed that four swimming bears seen the week earlier were the same polar bears recorded as dead in the next survey. The statistic in question was the percentage of

bears likely to survive when swimming in a storm—Monnett estimated it to be around 25%, whereas investigators put the number at more than 57%.

“Is there a potential we made a mistake, and the peer reviewers didn’t catch it? Possibly,” Gleason said.

If the scientists had reported the 57% figure, investigator May said, “how people were taking this and exaggerating the results, probably may not have happened in terms of the world taking your study as attributing [the drownings to] global warming.”

After nearly two hours of Monnett defending his work to investigators, Ruch from PEER asked the officials to explain what allegations are being made against Monnett.

May said they are examining the “wrong numbers,” “miscalculations” and “scientific misconduct.”

“Well, that’s not scientific misconduct anyway,” Monnett said. “If anything, it’s sloppy.”

“I mean, that’s not—I mean, I mean, the level of criticism that they seem to have leveled here, scientific misconduct suggests that we did something deliberately to deceive or to change it,” Monnett said.

“I sure don’t see any indication of that in what you’re asking me about,” Monnett said.

The actual survey Monnett was conducting when he observed the dead bears in 2004 was the migration of bowhead whales. Investigators questioned how he later obtained data for a table listing live and dead polar bear sightings from 1987 to 2004.

“So how could you make the statement that no dead polar bears were observed” during that time period? May asked.

“Because we talked to the people that had flown the flights, and they would remember whether they had seen any dead polar bears,” Monnett said.

Asked whether he had any documentation to back that up, Monnett said that he did not.

“Science is about making the best case you can to test your hypothesis,” Monnett said. “You assemble your arguments and your data, you put it out there, and you see who’s going to knock it down.”

“And surprisingly, nobody, you know, knocked this down in any way. Everybody was just kind of like, ‘Oh, yeah, four dead polar bears. Okay, that’s kind of cool,’ ” Monnett said.

Dr. Rob Roy Ramey, a biologist who specializes in endangered species scientific issues for Wildlife Science International, Inc., reviewed Monnett’s paper as well as the inspector general’s interviews for HUMAN EVENTS and said that the authors made unwarranted assumptions and large extrapolations based on a single event.

“They did not know if the polar bears actually drowned, they assumed that they had drowned. There were no statistical tests, just extrapolations made with no accounting for measurement error,” Ramey said.

“The paper gives the appearance that rigorous surveying was done for polar bears, when it was not,” Ramey said.

“They were flying at 1,500 feet with the purpose of looking for bowhead whales, which are much larger and easier to spot.”

Ramey also says he sees a conflict of interest for Monnett’s wife to be part of the internal peer review, and questioned the awarding of a contract to Derocher, who also participated in the peer review.

“That’s not impartial,” Ramey said. “It’s really important that peer review be truly independent. If they can’t be, then everyone has to state their conflict right up front.”

“I think it’s very illustrative of the problems with government research on endangered species, and raises the question as to whether government should be in the business of science,” Ramey said.

Numerous studies contributed to the bear’s listing as a protected species, including the paper on polar bear drowning, which was cited in the Federal Register’s proposed rule.

In making the announcement May 14, 2008, to protect the bear under the Endangered Species Act, the Interior Department said the listing “is based on the best available science, which shows the loss of sea ice threatens and will likely continue to threaten polar bear habitat.”

The Interior Department said it would modify regulatory language “to prevent abuse of this listing to erect a backdoor climate policy outside our normal system of political accountability.”

As part of the Endangered Species Act listing, the department said work would continue with scientists to monitor polar bear populations and trends, as well as the effects of oil and gas operations in the Beaufort Sea region.

“Power, money, authority and recognition come with listings on the endangered species list,” Ramey said.

Investigators conducted a second interview with Monnett on Tuesday. PEER said in a statement afterward that his “2006 peer-reviewed journal article on drowned polar bears remains the focus of the inquiry.”

Myron Ebell, director of energy and global warming policy at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, said that the government is expected to “spend trillions of dollars to save the world from global warming on the basis of what a few scientists say.”

“There needs to be due diligence, and we need to challenge and investigate every single claim. The public expects that,” Ebell said. “But we find over and over that

shoddy science has been put forward, and in some cases, dishonest and manipulated science, and they say, ‘Trust us,’ ” Ebell said.

“It’s extremely irresponsible.”

Audrey Hudson, an award-winning investigative journalist, is a Congressional Correspondent for HUMAN EVENTS. A native of Kentucky, Mrs. Hudson has worked inside the Beltway for nearly two decades -- on Capitol Hill as a Senate and House spokeswoman, and most recently at The Washington *Times* covering Congress, Homeland Security, and the Supreme Court.

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APNewsBreak: Arctic scientist under investigation



By BECKY BOHRER - Associated Press | AP - 8 hrs ago

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JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — A federal wildlife biologist whose observation in 2004 of presumably drowned [polar bears](#) in the Arctic helped to galvanize the global warming movement has been placed on [administrative leave](#) and is being investigated for [scientific misconduct](#), possibly over the veracity of that article.

Charles Monnett, an Anchorage-based scientist with the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement, or BOEMRE, was told July 18 that he was being put on leave, pending results of an investigation into "integrity issues." But he has not yet been informed by the inspector general's office of specific charges or questions related to the scientific integrity of his work, said Jeff Ruch, executive director of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility.

On Thursday, Ruch's watchdog group plans to file a complaint with the agency on Monnett's behalf, asserting that Obama administration officials have "actively persecuted" him in violation of policy intended to protect scientists from political interference.

Monnett, who has coordinated much of the agency's research on Arctic wildlife and ecology, has duties that include managing about \$50 million worth of studies, according to the complaint, a copy of which was provided to The Associated Press.

The complaint seeks Monnett's reinstatement along with a public apology from the agency and [inspector general](#). It also seeks to have the investigation dropped or to have the charges specified and the matter carried out in accordance with policy. The complaint also says that investigators took Monnett's computer hard drive, notebooks and other unspecified items from him, which have not been returned.

A BOEMRE spokeswoman declined to comment on an "ongoing internal investigation." Ruch said BOEMRE has barred Monnett from talking to reporters.

Documents provided by Ruch's group indicate questioning by investigators has centered on observations that Monnett and fellow researcher Jeffrey Gleason made in 2004, while conducting an

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aerial survey of bowhead whales, of four dead polar bears floating in the water after a storm. They detailed their observations in an article published two years later in the journal Polar Biology; presentations also were given at scientific gatherings.

In the peer-reviewed article, the researchers said they were reporting, to the best of their knowledge, the first observations of polar bears floating dead offshore and presumed drowned while apparently swimming long distances in open water. Polar bears are considered strong swimmers, they wrote, but long-distance swims may exact a greater metabolic toll than standing or walking on ice in better weather.

They said their observations suggested the bears drowned in rough seas and high winds and "suggest that drowning-related deaths of polar bears may increase in the future if the observed trend of regression of pack ice and/or longer open water periods continues."

The article and presentations drew national attention and helped make the polar bear something of a poster child for the global warming movement. Al Gore's mention of the polar bear in his documentary on climate change, "An Inconvenient Truth," came up during investigators' questioning of Gleason in January.

In May 2008, the U.S. classified the polar bear as a threatened species, the first with its survival at risk due to global warming.

According to a transcript, investigator Eric May asked Gleason his thoughts on Gore referencing the dead polar bears. Gleason said none of the polar bear papers he has written or co-authored has said "anything really" about global warming.

"It's something along the lines of the changing environment in the Arctic," he said.

Gleason said others put their own spin on research or observations.

The complaint alleges Gleason and Monnett were harassed by agency officials and received negative comments from them after the article was published. Gleason eventually took another Interior Department job; he didn't respond to an email and a BOEMRE spokeswoman said he wouldn't be available for comment.

Ruch also claimed the investigation is being done by criminal investigators with no scientific background, even though the case is an administrative matter.

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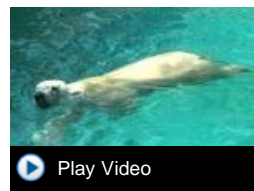
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Management Matters

Where's the Rigor?

By Brian Friel June 16, 2010

One decade ago, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy instructed federal agencies involved in scientific research to set up and follow integrity policies -- rules and procedures designed to ensure government-funded scientists produced reliable, accurate and objective work. Many federal agencies that spend billions of dollars on scientific endeavors still have not created such policies. One notable example is the Minerals Management Service, the Interior Department bureau that oversees offshore oil production, including the well that created the worst oil spill in American history this spring and summer.

The Interior inspector general reported recently that several years ago the department began developing an integrity policy that would cover MMS and other bureaus, including the [National Park Service](#) and the Fish and Wildlife Service. But officials quietly abandoned the effort, even after a departmentwide council created in 2007 came up with a draft policy. "A decision was made to delay the adoption of the policy," the IG reported. "This was due to several reasons, such as the bureaus' inability to reach consensus and the impending administration change." Apparently unwilling to accept the presidential changeover as an excuse to avoid sound management action, only the U.S. Geological Survey adopted a full integrity policy. Such policies can help ensure that misconduct or bad science is rooted out and resolved.

Interior is among seven Cabinet-level departments that didn't have comprehensive scientific integrity policies in place, the inspector general found, despite the fact that the Union of Concerned Scientists and other organizations have been calling for them for years. Several Interior scientific efforts had to be overhauled recently because of allegations of misconduct, so it's all the more striking that the department didn't adopt a policy.

Scientific agencies also are behind the eight-ball when it comes to measuring the results of the billions of taxpayer dollars invested in their research projects annually. The Office of Science and Technology Policy, along with the National Science Foundation and the [National Institutes of Health](#), is working on a \$1 million project to help science agencies develop measures to demonstrate the outcomes their work will produce. The first stage is an effort to show how many scientists and other workers are employed thanks to federal dollars at agencies, universities and research centers. That of course is only an input measurement. Project managers also promise to develop measures that show how federal science is helping the nation. But if the project follows the same trajectory as the integrity policy effort, then a decade from now those measures might still not exist.

The Gulf oil spill is a reminder of the life-and-death stakes involved in federal science. Research might be a trial-and-error enterprise, one that shouldn't be held to the same standards for results as routine operations. But it should be held to some standards. The lack of comprehensive integrity policies and the elementary state of performance measurement across many government science agencies shows managers of those operations have some work to do to instill rigorous management practices.

Brian Friel covered management and human resources at Government

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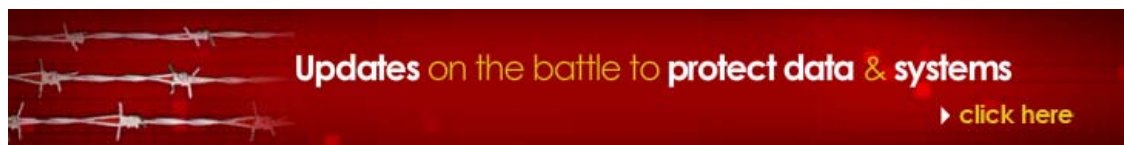
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Interior unveils new scientific integrity policy

By George A. Warner | gwarner@govexec.com | February 2, 2011

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar on Tuesday announced new scientific integrity rules in response to President Obama's 2009 call to end political manipulation of science.

The [rules](#), which take effect immediately, prohibit nonscientists in the department from modifying scientific findings, and spell out criteria for hiring scientists and evaluating their job performance.

The policy is designed to clarify the role of science within Interior's broad and diverse mandate. It defines the responsibilities of all workers -- including contractors and volunteers -- in maintaining scientific integrity, and goes over how to avoid conflicts of interest.

A departmental science integrity officer and science integrity directors at Interior's eight bureaus will lead and support efforts to implement the rules.

Alan Thornhill, science adviser to the director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement, said the rules reaffirm Salazar's commitment to making "science a foundation for decision-making" at Interior. They "encourage an environment of rigorous open discussion," Thornhill said, "unfettered by political interference."

Interior has been charged with manipulating scientific data for political ends, including allegations that scientists at the Minerals Management Service -- now the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement -- blocked the publication of scientific results that found oil exploration harmed wildlife.

In 2007, Interior's Office of the Inspector General found that Julie MacDonald, a political appointee, had altered the scientific findings of Endangered Species Program reports and pressured field staff to reach specific conclusions in their studies. While the IG found MacDonald's interference was above and beyond the norm, investigators said other officials in similar positions had "made changes to reports to reflect political philosophy."

Interior released a draft of the new rules in August 2010, opening them to public comment. Linda Gundersen, the director for the Office of Science Quality and Integrity at Interior's U.S. Geological Survey, said hundreds of groups responded with feedback. "It helped us address critical issues" with the rules, she said. "It was really wonderful."

Advocacy groups embraced the final rules issued on Tuesday, but called for further refinements.

Francesca Grifo, senior scientist and director of the scientific integrity program at the Union of Concerned Scientists, an environmental and scientific ethics watchdog group, called the new policy "lofty and inspiring," but noted it is "still missing a lot of details." UCS, in a press release, expressed concern that the policy's process for evaluating claims of misconduct lacks transparency.

Jeff Ruch, executive director of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, an advocacy group of federal, state and local

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environmental employees, said the policy was a "good faith effort." But the group also claimed the rules were ambiguous at times, noting they did not lay out the specifics for whistleblower protections and were vague on when scientists could be barred from discussing work with the media.

Still, Ruch encouraged other federal agencies to implement scientific integrity initiatives of their own. "If Interior can adopt science integrity rules, then surely other agencies such as [the [Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#)] and the Forest Service, have no excuse not to follow suit," he said.

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Salazar is assuming that the 'scientists' don't come with an agenda and use 'their' science to prove their predisposed conclusions. One only has to look at the global warming nonsense to realize that the bias is already there and Salazar must insure those hired have no preconceived notions

dan ketter | Posted February 3, 2011 | 1:16 PM

You see nothing will change this is about greed not whats best for this blue marble we ride on. The world leaders cant afford the truth why do you think the end of the article states this: "noting they did not lay out the specifics for whistleblower protections and were vague on when scientists could be barred from discussing work with the media" Media! is code for public. We care so much for our eviorment we hammered our industrial base with rules regulations and laws through the EPA and other orgs pushing our industrial base into 3rd world countries where they have none of this, now we know that is what is best for this planet isnt it. Looks to me a conspiracy to increase profits without doing the right thing and protecting the planets future. So it looks like China with no eviormental laws pushing pollution to all new levels in the world wont effect us? Or is it our leaders really dont care because by the time all this starts destroying our planet these folks will have lived comfortably all their lives just to leave a trashed planet for future generations? Then again what would you expect from our corrupt political systems of this world. Science is there they have shown the world our path and without change it isnt good but remember it will take a couple hundred years till the last living thing takes its last breath so why would corporations or any politician care "Party on Garth long as we gettin the money" Welcome to planet earth 2000 and beyond.

LC | Posted February 4, 2011 | 8:33 AM

It is regrettable but not surprising that a political appointee would deliberately alter a scientific report for political reasons. But it is even more regrettable that scientists would deliberately alter or detroy data that doesn't fit their own political perspective. Such was the case at the University of East Anglia where scientists deliberately detroyed vital climate data that didn't support their global warming theories. So we can keep the politicians out of the science but what do we do when we can't trust the scientists?

JohnB | Posted February 3, 2011 | 1:16 PM

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