From the Hill to the Field

Great White Lies

By Dan Kidder
Managing Editor

In April, several hunting and wild life groups joined together to submit a letter to congress advocating against the inclusion of the polar bear on the Endangered Species List.

The letter to the U.S. Senate's Environment and Public Works Committee, chaired by our good friend Barbara Boxer (D-CA), was in response to an attempt to ban the importation of polar bear trophies from Canada.

Let's not believe for one second that this is about protecting polar bears, but is in reality a thinly veiled attempt to cram bunk science down our throats about global warming.

Even the committee's ranking member, Sen. Jim Inhofe (R- OK) was skeptical. In his opening statement, Senator Inhofe said, "The fact that we have had two hearings on this single listing decision reinforces my belief that listing the polar bear is not about protecting the bear…….. I worry that we have spent and will continue to spend, too much time and money examining a healthy species and manufacturing ways to predict its demise, when there are hundreds of species legitimately on the list that need these scarce department resources. "

As the letter states, because of sound conservation by the Canadian government, once declining numbers of polar bears have rebounded to levels three times higher than in the 60's and 70's. Additionally, the number of tags issued by the Canadian government will decide how many polar bears are harvested, not U.S. restrictions on the importation of trophies. If U.S. hunters are not harvesting the bears, locals interested in the meat will use the tags.

Additionally, restricting U.S. trophy hunters will only cause significant financial hardship on the local native populations in the regions where polar bears are hunted. In short, it will have no impact on polar bear populations, which are so high now that, eerily reminiscent to case of the wolf, the bears are becoming a nuisance to locals and other wildlife.

The key that gives this away as a global warming argument is Senator Boxer's own statement, "scientists around the world are greatly concerned about the polar bear's future, due to global warming and melting sea ice, which polar bears depend on to hunt and den."

Since scientists around the world are far from agreement about the origins of life on this planet, let alone whether global warming is a fact or fiction, Boxer's statement demonstrates that she is more concerned with appearing politically correct to her constituents than she is with the outcome of polar bear populations.

Even if the U.S. listed these animals as an endangered or protected species, it would have no impact on the numbers killed and would not prevent extinction, should global warming be a reality. According to Boxer's own statement, "given that according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, as many as one-third of the world's species are at risk of extinction if global temperatures exceed 1.5-2.5°Celsius above present day levels. We need to be redoubling our efforts to protect species from extinction-not curtailing them. And more species will be threatened if temperatures go higher."

If indeed this proves to be true, which is highly spurious, then no amount of listing these animals on a piece of paper in Washington, DC is going to protect them from the coming apocalypse. Given that, one begins to wonder that perhaps this drive to list polar bears is more about the hunters and less about the bears.

Make sure you let your legislators know that you hunt or fish, that you are informed and that you vote. To contact your legislator and let them know your position on these issues, visit the write your representative pages at www.senate.gov or www.house.gov or call the Capitol Hill Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask to be transferred to your representatives.

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