

# Climate change transforms Alaska landscape

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Canadian researchers say lakes and wetlands in Alaska's Kenai Peninsula are drying at a significant rate due to global warming.

In a paper published in the August issue of the Canadian Journal of Forest Research, biologist Eric Klein and colleagues at Alaska Pacific University document a significant landscape shift from wetlands to woodland in the Kenai Peninsula Lowlands.

Klein says the transformation of Alaska's landscape corresponds with an increase in temperatures during the past 100 years.

He compared aerial photos of the Kenai Peninsula taken in 1950 and 1996. Combined with field study and vegetation analysis, he said the research confirms wooded areas increased from 57 percent to 73 percent between 1950 and 1996, while wetland areas decreased from 5 percent to 1 percent.

Scientists note the rate of temperature increase from 1976 to the present has been greater than at any other time during the last 1,000 years.

Klein said during the last 15 to 25 years, species such as dwarf birch, blueberries and black spruce have grown in areas where wetlands had existed for 8,000 to 12,000 years.

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