

White House considers listing polar bears

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The U.S. Interior Department is considering whether to list the polar bear as an endangered species, it was reported Sunday.

Concerns that the bears' Arctic habitat is thawing because of global warming are prompting calls for the species to be extended federal protections, The Los Angeles Times reported.

"All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others," said Kassie Siegel, an attorney with the non-profit Center for Biological Diversity. "And then there is the polar bear."

If the planet continues warming, two-thirds of the polar bear population could be gone by 2050, the newspaper reported.

If listed, the polar bear would be the first animal granted protections as a consequence of global warming. The federal government would then be required to protect the bears in Alaska, the only place in the United States the species lives.

Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., asked U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director H. Dale Hall last week whether listing the polar bear could be used to halt the construction of a new power plant in Oklahoma City, The Times reported.

"The Endangered Species Act is not the vehicle to reach out and demand all of the things that need to happen to address climate change," Hall responded.

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