

British team trek to North Pole to measure sea ice

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British explorers Pen Hadow (left) and Ann Daniels are seen holding a press conference about the Catlin Arctic Survey in London, January 22. Explorers, including Hadow and Daniels, have set out on a 90-day skiing expedition to the North Pole, measuring sea ice thickness the whole way to find out exactly how fast it is disappearing.

Three British explorers have set out on a 90-day skiing expedition to the North Pole, measuring sea ice thickness the whole way to find out exactly how fast it is disappearing, according to the Catlin Arctic Survey.

The data gathered will complement satellite and submarine observations and help ice modelling of the polar ice by experts, including Wieslaw Maslowski, who recently predicted the Arctic Ocean could be ice free as early as 2013, the London-based survey said in a statement.

Global warming is believed to be the main culprit in the rapidly melting north polar ice cap that is freeing up new sea routes and untapped mineral resources on the ocean bottom.

The three expedition members -- project director and ice team leader Pen Hadow, Martin Hartley and Ann Daniels -- were dropped off by plane Saturday on an ice floe some 668 miles (1075 km) from northern Canada.

They will ski most of the way, taking millions of measurements of the thickness of the remaining ice, assessing its density and the depth of the overlying snow, as well as taking weather and sea temperature readings, Catlin said.

The team will be re-supplied every 20-25 days and will be using satellite communications to send photos, video and data.

Their progress can be followed step by step on the expedition website: Catlinarcticsurvey.com.

Maslowski teaches at US Navy Postgraduate Naval School in Monterey, California.

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