

Arctic scientist's complaint being reviewed

August 13 2011, By BECKY BOHRER , Associated Press

(AP) -- An inquiry is under way into the treatment of suspended Arctic scientist Charles Monnett, an Interior Department official said.

The department's scientific integrity officer, Ralph Morgenweck, confirmed the inquiry in a letter this week to the [watchdog group](#) Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. PEER, which filed a [complaint](#) last month on Monnett's behalf, provided a copy to The Associated Press on Friday.

The group accuses top officials within Interior's Bureau of [Ocean Energy](#) Management, Regulation and Enforcement, or BOEMRE, of scientific and scholarly misconduct for their treatment of Monnett.

PEER said Monnett, who coordinated much of BOEMRE's research on the Arctic ecology and wildlife, was placed on leave pending results of an inspector general's investigation into "integrity issues."

PEER, in its complaint, asked that Monnett be reinstated and that the investigation be dropped or pursued by specifying charges against Monnett, in accordance with department policy.

An Interior spokesman said Friday that the letter shows that PEER's allegation is being reviewed under the "standard procedures" contained within a scientific integrity policy implemented earlier this year.

PEER lists as subjects of its complaint agency director Michael Bromwich, acting Alaska regional director James Kendall, deputy

regional director Jeffery Loman and any others involved in the handling of Monnett's case. It also names a special agent within the inspector general's office, who has questioned Monnett and his chain-of-command.

PEER has said the investigation into Monnett has focused on the scientific merit of a 2006 article in which he and a colleague recorded their observations of apparently drowned [polar bears](#) in the Arctic. That article helped to galvanize the global warming movement.

Monnett's suspension came in the midst of a monthslong investigation by the inspector general's office. BOEMRE has indicated that his being placed on leave was related to how a polar bear research project was awarded and managed.

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