

Siberian permafrost melting

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Russian scientists said the western Siberian sub-Arctic region -- a peat bog the size of France and Germany -- has begun to thaw.

The scientists warned the melting permafrost could unleash billions of tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, the Daily Telegraph reported Thursday.

The 360,000 square miles of western Siberia may turn into a watery landscape of shallow lakes and it could release huge quantities of methane trapped in the frozen peat, according to researchers Sergei Kirpotin, a botanist from Tomsk State University in Russia, and Judith Marquand from Oxford University.

Kirpotin told New Scientist the western Siberian sub-Arctic region had begun to melt in the last three or four years in an "ecological landslide that is probably irreversible and undoubtedly connected to climatic warming."

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