

# Sustainable Development Law & Policy

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Volume 8

Issue 3 *Spring 2008: Environmental Change in Polar Regions*

Article 2

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## Editor's Note

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### Recommended Citation

"Editor's Note." *Sustainable Development Law & Policy*, Spring 2008, 1.

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# EDITORS' NOTE

Currently we are in an International Polar Year (“IPY”) and the timing could not be better. The Polar Regions are taking the first and hardest hit from anthropogenic climate change. Almost all predictions for climate stability in the Polar Regions have recently been shattered. Temperature increases have exceeded expectations, the tree line has pushed farther north than expected, and ice is melting faster than anticipated. As a result of this IPY and the immediate needs of Polar people, ecosystems, and environment, *Sustainable Development Law & Policy* (“SDLP”) felt it was necessary to have this issue.

Environmental change is happening, and the Polar Regions are among the least equipped to handle the new stresses. Due to wind patterns and ocean currents across the globe, the Polar Regions are acting as repositories for soot and many hazardous chemicals. This soot is darker than the ice and snow and attracts heat, thus increasing the speed at which the poles are thawing. The chemicals funneled to the Arctic are being accumulated over time in various species; these concentrations of chemicals would normally qualify as hazardous waste under Environmental Protection Agency regulations. Furthermore, changes in the Polar Regions may speed up global warming and cause abrupt climate change events as a result of ice melt raising sea levels or permafrost disappearing and releasing in massive methane emissions.

In this issue we hope to provide information and publicity to important polar issues. Articles include the effects of climate change on indigenous populations, possibilities for the creation of an Arctic treaty system, the global complications of efforts by Australia to fight whaling, species issues, and growing resource extraction and shipping in the Arctic. With this issue we hope SDLP can assist the IPY to move beyond research and debate to encourage actions that will protect our planet for all future generations.



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