

Climate and Health E-News

Raising Awareness and Connecting People in the Interest of Public Health

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Arctic Rivers, Rapid Change – Arctic rivers in areas characterized by thawing permafrost are increasingly becoming wide, shallow and muddy. ANTHC performed surveys of three rivers in 2009 and 2010 including the Kukpuk (near Point Hope), the Wulik (near Kivalina), and the Noatak. In all rivers we found that thawing permafrost is rapidly undercutting banks and resulting in slumps and collapse that are making river banks unstable, navigation more difficult, and reducing water quality. This can affect health by decreasing safety for river travel, limiting access to subsistence areas, and stressing public water systems. A recent article in the [Anchorage Daily News](#) (August 16) reported the stranding of 16 people from Newtok on the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta when they ran aground on a sand bar. Newtok Tribal Environmental Coordinator, Margaret Nickerson wrote us this comment describing similar river change in the YK:

“Since the time I was young, I was asked by my father to be watchful of everything around me, I did not understand what he meant by that. But as I remember, there were no sandbars when I used to travel with him a lot. Even the big Kuskokwim River is eroding away along with the coastal line, they are adding up. The wind, the tide of water that goes back and force is eating the permafrost faster”.

Climate Change Brings Wasps to Baffin Island – *Science Daily (CBC News, August 19, 2010)*

Researchers collecting bugs in the Canadian Arctic this summer have confirmed wasps are breeding on [Baffin Island](#), which they say is further evidence of climate change. Students and faculty from the University of Prince Edward Island joined teams from the University of Toronto and McGill University of Montreal in several northern locations, including Lake Hazen, Nunavut, Goose Bay, N.L., and Baffin Island. [Read Article](#)

Alaska Largest Caribou Herd Stable – *Wildlife News*. Recent studies have raised concerns that a variety of climate change impacts including encroaching woody plants on Arctic tundra, drought, and wildfire may reduce the range of Alaska caribou. Despite this the Alaska Department of Fish and Game reports that the population of the Western Arctic Herd remains stable at 401,000, as of July 2010. However, herd declines from 2003 to 2007. “may have been largely attributable to severe icing during one or two winters” presenting another climate related risk for Arctic herds. [Read Report](#)

If you have an observation or an update you would like to include in our E-News or have added to our Alaska Climate Events Map, send a message to mbrubaker@anthc.org. To join the E-News mailing list, just respond to this message with your contact (e-mail/name) information. Click [> here](#) for prior E-News archived at the Arctic Health Library.

Regards – Mike

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