

**Alaska Center for Climate and Health - E-News**  
**Raising Awareness about Climate Change Impacts on Public Health**  
**No. 60, March 24, 2011**

**CDC-funded Program Will Create Climate Change Observers in Alaska Villages** – March 17, 2011 Alaska Natives once served as the nation's eyes and ears against invasion during World War II. Now, a new group of village sentinels is being asked to observe climate change on the country's remote edges. Dozens of rural residents across Alaska will document changes in weather, harvesting, health, and food and water safety, under a \$250,000 project funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. [Arctic Sounder](#)

**Thawing Arctic Permafrost Poised to Release Vast Carbon Stores** – March 2, 2011 Buried in the ground across the Far North are billions of tons of plant matter deposited over thousands of years, before the last Ice Age. But now rapid decay of all the frozen organic stuff has begun as the permafrost thaws and increasingly releases carbon into the atmosphere. [Alaska Dispatch](#)

**Warmer Arctic Could Increase Threat of Disease for Caribou, Other Foods** March 17, 2011 Climate could affect the balance between humans, animals and pathogens according to a paper in the online journal [Acta Veterinaria Scandinavica](#), by UAF microbiologist Karsten Hueffer. "People and animals can reach a point of equilibrium in which the pathogens that affect them do not cause a lot of disease." Day length and temperature are thought to play a significant role in regulating this equilibrium. [Dutch Harbor Fisherman](#)

**Alaska Climate Events Map** – Visit our [Google Map](#) to see incidents and events that have occurred around Alaska this month, with relevance for climate and health. See map additions including the death of a musk oxen herd in a winter flood, and an orca stranding in Southeast.

**Update on Arctic Ozone Story** - As an update to our posting last week entitled, *Arctic on the Verge of Record Ozone Loss*, the Center for Climate and Health contacted Dr. Markus Rex with the Potsdam Research Unit of the [Alfred Wegener Institute](#). The [ScienceDaily](#) article reported that about half of the ozone above the Arctic had been destroyed over the past few weeks and that, "special attention should be devoted to sufficient UV protection in the spring this year." We asked Dr. Rex about health implications for Alaska. He writes: *Generally UV levels in the Arctic are much lower than at lower latitudes and hence they are of much less concern where you live. The advise to use sunscreen this spring was meant for communities in Central Europe or the northern part of the continental US (i.e. excluding Alaska), rather than for the high Arctic region. But it is unclear right now where things are heading over the next few weeks and you may want to follow the news to observe what is happening. But there is a sensitive period when UV may reach levels which clearly require protection for sensitive persons. That is the time when the sun is already fairly high in spring but the ground is still snow covered, such that it reflects the radiation. Eye protection (sunglasses) would certainly be necessary for everyone staying outside on snow covered ground.* You can read the full response from Dr. Rex in the [attached PDF document](#).

The *Climate and Health E-News* is received around the circumpolar north by people who are interested in climate impact on health. For back issues or to join the mailing list visit our [website](#) or contact us via e-mail or by phone.

Regards - Mike

Michael Brubaker  
Center for Climate and Health  
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium  
Tel. 907-729-2464

*If you wish to be removed from the Climate and Health E-News distribution list, just send me an e-mail.*