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Obama Bolsters Protections for Polar Bears

Department of Interior proposes habitat protection plan for climate threatened species

Washington, DC – The Obama Administration today released its proposed rule designating critical habitat for polar bears under the Endangered Species Act. After listing the bear as threatened under the Act last year, the Department of Interior is now proposing to designate for protection 200,541 square miles of the polar bear's melting sea ice habitat, as well as barrier islands and terrestrial denning habitat.

John Kostyack, Executive Director of Wildlife Conservation and Global Warming at National Wildlife Federation had this to say:

"The Department of Interior continues to demonstrate its commitment to safeguarding wildlife and natural resources from the current and anticipated effects of climate change. Designating critical habitat will give polar bears some much needed relief.

"While Congress works to address the challenge of climate change comprehensively through legislation that caps global warming pollution and invests in clean energy jobs and natural resources safeguards, we applaud the Obama administration for moving forward with protections for wildlife already being threatened by climate change.

"Because a critical habitat designation under the Endangered Species Act cannot remove the biggest threat to polar bears – global warming pollution – we must do everything we can to reduce the other stressors, particularly oil and gas development activity in their habitat. Doing anything less ignores our obligation to future generations to be good stewards of the planet."

The National Wildlife Federation intends to analyze the detailed maps of the areas covered by the proposed critical habitat designation and to provide comments to the Interior Department.

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The [National Wildlife Federation](http://www.nwf.org) inspires Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future.