

Antarctic Peninsula In the News

As the NSIDC and others have reported the Antarctic set a new record for extent of sea ice this past winter. The IPCC report noted that Antarctica with the possible exception of the region near the Antarctic Peninsula appeared to be stable and unlikely to show much decline and may with increased snowfall actually build snow and ice. But that hasn't stopped the claims that the melting of Antarctica is a concern. Junk Science reports on the latest study and then looks at some actual data.

By Steve Milloy, Junk Science

A Globe and Mail story Antarctic ice sheet shrinking at faster rate noted one of the biggest worries about global warming has been its potential to affect the stability of the Antarctic ice sheet, a vast storehouse of frozen water that would inundate the world's coastal regions if it were to melt because of a warming climate.

The southern continent contains enough ice to raise ocean levels by about 60 meters, a deluge that would put every major coastal city in the world deep under water and uproot hundreds of millions of people.

The huge implications posed by the health of the ice sheet have prompted major scientific interest into whether it is growing, shrinking, or stable, with no clear consensus among researchers about its overall trend.

But a new study released today, based on some of the most extensive measurements to date of the continent's ice mass, presents a worrisome development: Antarctica's ice sheet is shrinking, at a rate that increased dramatically from 1996 to 2006.

"Over the time period of our survey, the ice sheet as a whole was certainly losing mass, and the mass loss increased by 75 per cent in 10 years," the study said.

The results of the research project, led by Dr. Eric Rignot, principal scientist for the Radar Science and Engineering Section at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory's in Pasadena, Calif., appear in the current issue of Nature Geoscience.

In an e-mail, Dr. Rignot attributed the shrinkage in the ice sheet to an upwelling of warm waters along the Antarctic coast, which is causing some glaciers to flow more rapidly into the ocean.

He suspects the trend is due to global warming, and isn't part of a normal natural fluctuation.

Junk Science Comments

Our guess is it'll be at least next week before competing statistics says the Antarctic is *gaining* ice mass. What isn't highlighted in this piece is that this again relies on PlayStation® climatology -- compared with *models* the WAIS appears to be losing mass.

Meanwhile JunkScience reader M O'R has beaten us to checking the data, pointing out that the Antarctic Peninsula (the region of alleged ice loss) shows dramatic cooling over the last year and providing the following:

Five GISS Stations To The North And East Coast Of The West Antarctic Peninsula

70188968000 BASE ORCADAS -60.75 -44.72 6 0R -9HIICCO 1x-9WATER
http://data.giss.nasa.gov/cgi-bin/gistemp/gistemp_station.py?id=301889630008&data_set=1&num_neighbors=1

70089050000 BELLINGSHAUSE -62.20 -58.93 16 76R -9HIICCO 1x-9ANTARCTICA A
http://data.giss.nasa.gov/cgi-bin/gistemp/gistemp_station.py?id=700890500008&data_set=1&num_neighbors=1

30489056000 CENTRO MET.AN, Marsh -62.42 -58.88 10 0R -9HIICCO 1x-9ANTARCTICA A
http://data.giss.nasa.gov/cgi-bin/gistemp/gistemp_station.py?id=304890560008&data_set=1&num_neighbors=1

30188963000 BASE ESPERANZ -63.40 -56.98 13 45R -9HIICCO 1x-9WATER A
http://data.giss.nasa.gov/cgi-bin/gistemp/gistemp_station.py?id=301889630008&data_set=1&num_neighbors=1

70089055000 CMS_VICE.DO.Marambio -64.23 -56.72 198 0R -9HIICCO 1x-9WATER A
http://data.giss.nasa.gov/cgi-bin/gistemp/gistemp_station.py?id=700890550008&data_set=1&num_neighbors=1

Three GISS Stations On The West Coast Of The West Antarctic Peninsula

70089063000 FARADAY -65.25 -64.27 11 0R -9HIICCO 1x-9WATER A
http://data.giss.nasa.gov/cgi-bin/gistemp/gistemp_station.py?id=700890630008&data_set=1&num_neighbors=1

70089062000 ROTHERA POINT -67.57 -68.13 16 12R -9HIICCO 1x-9WATER A
http://data.giss.nasa.gov/cgi-bin/gistemp/gistemp_station.py?id=700890620000&data_set=1&num_neighbors=1

70089066000 BASE SAN MARTIN -68.13 -67.13 4 233R -9MVICCO 1x-9WATER A

http://data.giss.nasa.gov/cgi-bin/gistemp/gistemp_station.py?id=700890660004&data_set=1&num_neighbors=1

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