

Environment

By RUPERT MORGAN

S.O.S.
ALASKA

In America's largest state, **climate change** is not a theory. It is an **everyday reality**. As world leaders meet

In Paris for the climate change conference, it's clear that **answers need to be found**. And quick...



40%
is the reduction
in polar bear
numbers in
Alaska and
Canada since
the year 2000
[National Geographic]

Who is sounding the alarm?

US President Barack Obama, no less. He recently just made a three-day visit to the frozen north of Alaska (the first president to do so) to draw attention to the dramatic environmental situation there.

"The alarm bells are ringing," he said. "Climate change is no longer some far-off problem. It is happening here, it is happening now."

This is no exaggeration: Arctic regions are warming twice as fast as the rest of the world. Coastal areas in Alaska are losing a football field* of land each day because of rising seas and coastal erosion. As a result, no less than 30 Alaskan villages are soon to disappear under the water.

"The ice in the fall" used to protect our coastline from heavy waves," explains one local man. "Now the waves wash away our shores."

Further inland, glaciers and permafrost are melting rapidly, reducing the Earth's ability to reflect sunlight back into space and so accelerating global warming for the whole planet.

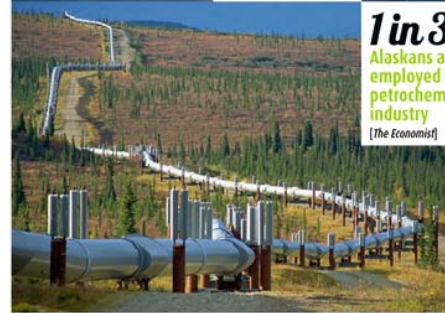
"The Arctic is at the leading edge of climate change, a leading indicator of what the entire planet faces," Obama said.

What can Obama do to protect Alaska?

Global warming requires global action, but Obama has done as much as he realistically can on his own - forcing US power stations to reduce their emissions by 32% and banning onshore and offshore oil exploration in a vast, 22 million-acre region of land and water in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), created in 1980.



736,000
Alaskans live
in an area* that is
larger than France
[The Guardian]



1 in 3
Alaskans are
employed by the
petrochemical
industry
[The Economist]



INTO THE WILD:
President Obama
used his recent
trip to Alaska to
raise awareness of
the dangers of
climate change.

These 22 million acres will be given the most protected status of "wilderness". And indeed, the ANWR is one of the last pristine wildernesses on the planet - home to thousands of caribou, wolves and bears on land and a key breeding ground for whales, walrus and salmon along its Arctic coast. The Gwich'in tribe, a local native population, call this coastal plain "The Sacred Place Where Life Begins".

"Fish come here from the Arctic Ocean to spawn", according to tribal leader Sarah James. "Polar bears make their dens" along the coast. Wolves and grizzlies and wolverines have their young here."

Are all Alaskans happy about the ANWR's protected status?

You'd think so, wouldn't you? But no. Alaskan senator Lisa Murkowski has called the Obama administration's plan to designate an additional 22 million acres of the ANWR as wilderness "a stunning" attack on our sovereignty and the measure is deeply unpopular with locals.

The reason is simple: the oil industry employs one third of Alaskans and every resident receives an annual royalty cheque from oil revenues - the figure was \$1,884 last year. In recent times, tax revenues on oil being pumped through the Trans-Alaska pipeline have covered 90% of the state's finances, meaning Alaskans pay no income tax or sales tax.

But older oil fields are now running dry and the pipeline is only working at 25% capacity. Alaskans believe that huge oil reserves exist in the ANWR and so want to be able to drill directly inside the refuge and along the coast. The environmentalists' fight to prevent this has been intense - a law to protect the area has been introduced in Congress (and failed) to pass every year since 1986.

Obama's measure only protects the area for the next five years, so the fight is certainly not over. A new administration may well reverse his decision.

Don't Alaskans care about global warming?

Not enough, it seems. Obama's real objective in visiting Alaska was to raise public awareness before the current climate change conference in Paris. Collective action to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels is the only way forward, he argues.

"This year, in Paris, has to be the year that the world finally reaches an agreement to protect the one planet that we've got while we still can," he said. "As long as I am president, America will lead the world to meet" this threat.

But he is only president for one more year...



AUDIO 1
S.O.S. Alaska
A écouter sur votre
CD ou sur votre
smartphone.

VOCABULARY R.10

area: zone
bay: baie
coastline: littoral

draw attention: attirer l'attention
fall: automne
far-off: lointain
field: terrain

frozen: gelé
leading edge: (be at the ...) être aux avant-postes

melt: fondre
onshore and offshore oil: exploitation: forage terrestre et en mer

power station: centrale électrique
warn: se réchauffer
wash away: emporter

VOCABULARY R.11

area: zone
breeding ground: zone de reproduction

care about: se soucier de
den: tanière
drill: faire des forages

fail to pass: ne pas arriver à être promulgué
fossil fuel: combustible fossile

income tax: impôt sur le revenu
lead: donner l'exemple

meet a threat: affronter une menace
oil: pétrole

pristine: épargné par l'homme
raise awareness: sensibiliser
reach: parvenir à

reliance: dépendance
reverse: renverser
run dry: s'épuiser
spawn: fraier
stunning: stupéfiant
walrus: morse

wilderness: régions sauvages
wolverine: caracassier

bayard
I Love English
WORLD

Dépassez vos frontières !
I Love English
WORLD

№ 278
December
2015



Environment

SOS
Alaska

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with
a cause:
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Jolie

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N° de Commission
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STAR
WARS
Welcome
back to
a galaxy
far, far away



Queen
Elizabeth II
Long
has she
reigned



Technology
No Man's
Sky: video
game



Success
Story
VOGUE