

Alaskans address hot global issue

FAIRBANKS — Even Alaskans, who generally welcome all warming trends, have to agree that global warming and pollution is undesirable.

At recent public appearances by U.S. Rep. Claudine Schneider, R-R.I., concerned Alaska citizens and scientists showed support for her comprehensive global warming bill which will be introduced into the House next session.

"Our Mother Earth has a fever," Schneider said at the Sept. 16 40th Arctic Science Conference at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. "We need to look at her symptoms, such as sea level rise and recent flooding in Bangladesh."

Changes in the Earth are inevitable. But according to Schneider, human contributions to change now outweigh natural causes, which is why she sponsors House Bill 1078 — the "Global Warming Prevention Act."

Increased gases, such as carbon dioxide, methane and chlorofluorocarbons probably contribute to a heating trend by preventing the natural escape of heat, she said. And complications like destruction of the tropical rainforests add to the problem because trees remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Dr. Gunter Weller, professor of geophysics at the UAF Geophysical Institute, said the temperature of the Earth has risen half a degree Centigrade in the last hundred years.

Weller said researchers have not proven the warming was caused by "greenhouse" gas buildup, but the bulk of research indicates there will be climate change.

Regardless of the cause of the warming, Weller said that the issues in Schneider's bill are worth addressing.

According to Schneider, the bill will help Americans save several hundred billion dollars per year on their energy bills, reduce foreign oil imports and the trade deficit and reduce environmental pollutants.

The United States, the largest energy consumer and the major contributor of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, should be a leader in changing global policy, Schneider said.

We must use renewable resources to produce energy, and we must use gas, she said.

Schneider said she feels that health, oil spill prevention, materials science and energy saving technology have been neglected.

Schneider's visit to Fairbanks was sponsored by the Association for Women in Science — Alaska Chapter, UAF Special Events and the University of Alaska Sea Grant College Program.