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ENVIRONMENT

Greenland's ice cap super melting

Fri, 11 Aug 2006

The vast ice cap that covers most of Greenland is melting at a spectacular rate, and three times faster than five years ago, reports National Geographic News.

This is according to a new study, published online by the journal Science, which further indicates that Greenland is currently losing 200 cubic kilometres of ice each year — and accelerating.

The study also finds that the melting polar ice is raising sea levels around the globe. This could have a serious impact as global sea levels will rise by 6.5 metres if all the ice on Greenland were to melt, which could result in many islands being wiped out and even low-lying countries such as the Netherlands.

According to the National Geographic News, the challenge to scientists is to now examine whether the island is losing more ice mass through melting than it gains from new snow.

Greenland's ice sheet is almost five kilometres thick in some places.

The results of the study come from nearly a decade's satellite observations from a team of the University of Texas, reports the San Francisco Chronicle.

"We have only been watching the ice cap melt during a relatively short period," Jianli Chen told the San Francisco Chronicle on Thursday, "but we are seeing the strongest evidence of it yet, and in the near future the pace of melting will accelerate even more."

The satellites used in the Greenland study was apparently also used recently by two University of Colorado researchers to monitor the ice sheet loss on Antarctica, where similar trends were found.



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