



MEDIA ADVISORY:

DECEMBER 13TH: IPY DAY FOCUSING ON ICE SHEETS

December 5th, 2007

On December 13th, 2007, the International Polar Year (IPY) will launch its second 'International Polar Day', focussing on Ice Sheets and Traverses. In preparation for this, a special webpage <http://www.ipy.org/index.php?ipy/detail/ice_sheets>, has been prepared with information for Press and Educators, details of current projects and expeditions, contact details for scientists around the world, including in the polar regions, images, background information and useful links and resources.

90% of the Earth's freshwater is locked up in the great Ice Sheets of Greenland and Antarctica. Several papers have discussed the potential impact of Ice Sheets melting in a warmer climate, but to understand these processes better, we need the results of critical IPY research.

International teams of scientists from Norway, Japan, Sweden, USA and China are currently engaged in coordinated Antarctic traverses, traveling across, and probing, the ice to learn more about a wide range of physical and chemical properties of the East Antarctic Ice Sheet. They are also experiencing the physical challenges of carrying out cutting-edge research in the coldest, windiest, and driest continent. Similar studies occurred in Greenland in the northern summer, involving scientists from yet more countries. This information will be supported by and compared with satellite data, ice sheet models, data from static core drilling sites, and remote studies of sub-glacial water systems. These are the jigsaw pieces that will help us to understand the complexity of Ice Sheets, how they grow and reduce, and what implications there might be for sea level in a warmer climate.

More than 20 international IPY projects presently study some aspect of Ice Sheets, or are affected by Ice Sheets. The International Polar Day focussing on Ice Sheets represents an opportunity to learn more about these projects and to talk to the experts directly about their research. There will also be a wide range of educational and community activities including classroom experiments, a virtual balloon launch, and live web-conferencing with the scientists on traverses in Antarctica.

About IPY and International Polar Days

The International Polar Year 2007-8 is a large international and interdisciplinary coordinated research effort focused on the polar regions. An estimated 50,000 participants from more 60 countries are involved in research as diverse as anthropology and astronomy, health and history, and genomics and glaciology. This fourth IPY was launched in March 2007, and will continue through early 2009. During

this time, a regular sequence of International Polar Days will raise awareness and provide information about particular and timely aspects of the polar regions. The Polar Days will include press releases, contacts to experts in several languages, activities for teachers, on-line community participation, web-conferencing events, and links to researchers in the Arctic and Antarctic. The complete schedule for International Polar Days is listed below.

September 21st 2007: Sea Ice
sea ice, marine life, changing climate

December 13th 2007: Ice Sheets
ice sheets, traverses, expeditions, adventure

March 13th 2008: Changing Earth, Past & Present
ice, climate, oceans, paleoclimate, Earth history

June 18th 2008: Lands, Plants, and Animals/ Land and Life
permafrost, terrestrial biodiversity, hydrology, snow

September 17th 2008: People
social sciences

December 2008: Above the Poles
astronomy, meteorology, atmospheric sciences

March 2009: Oceans and Marine Life
marine biodiversity, physical oceanography

About Ice Sheets

Ice sheets, the large, thick and 'permanent' frozen masses that cover most of Antarctica and Greenland, represent a distinctive feature of our planet. Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets contain almost all of the world's ice and most of the world's fresh water. Ice sheets accumulate new layers of snow at the surface. They slowly flow toward coastlines, often in large ice streams, and can extend over adjacent oceans as ice shelves. During cold climates (ice ages), the mass and area of ice sheets grow, and global sea level decreases. During warm climates, the mass and area of ice sheets decrease and sea level rises. Urgent questions of how fast ice sheets can change require advanced tools and models, but also on-ice measurements related to those of 50 years ago.

Contact

For more information regarding this event, please contact
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For more information and contact details, please visit the IPY Ice Sheet webpage:
<http://www.ipy.org/index.php?/ipy/detail/ice_sheets>.

For more information about the International Polar Year, please visit www.ipy.org