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MEDIA ADVISORY

Global Warming and Alaska's Future

(JUNEAU) – A state expert on global climatology will share his views on climatic change and how Alaska might fare under global warming, at a House Resources Committee meeting on Monday, Feb. 26.

Gunter Weller, Ph.D., professor of Geophysics Emeritus and director of the Center for Global Change Research at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, will make his presentation before the committee at 1 p.m. in the House Resources Committee Room, Room 124 of the Capitol.

“I hope other legislators and department officials attend this presentation,” said Rep. Drew Scalzi (R-Homer), co-chair of the Resources Committee. “As a strong proponent of ‘show me the science,’ I’m looking forward to learning about global warming and any predictions Professor Weller may have for the consequences it may have, either good or bad, on our state’s natural resources.”

Alaska has experienced the largest regional warming of any state in the United States with a rise in average winter temperature of 8 degrees since the 1960s, and precipitation has increased roughly 30 percent between 1968 and 1990, according to Weller. His presentation will seek to shed light on such questions as:

- What do these climatic changes mean for Alaska?
- How do they impact our forests and agriculture, marine ecosystems, fisheries and subsistence livelihoods?
- What will the effects of warming be on Alaska’s permafrost and coastal communities?
- How will the financial effect of these changes impact the state’s fiscal policies?

In addition to his other academic and research positions, Weller serves as director of the Cooperative Institute for Arctic Research at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, which is jointly operated by the University and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Much of his career has been devoted to researching climatic changes.

Weller’s previous research includes study of the climate of, and the impact of climate changes on, Antarctica and the Arctic. He was project manager of the NOAA-BLM Outer Continental Shelf Environmental Assessment Program in the Arctic from 1975-82, project director of the NASA-UAA SAR Facility from 1986 to 1993 and deputy director of the Geophysical Institute from 1984 to 1986 and from 1990 to 1997.

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