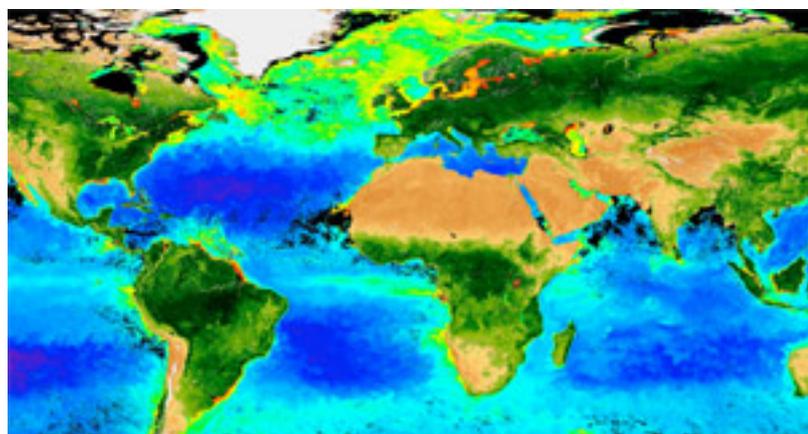


Climate change worsens POPs impacts

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[Persistent Organic Pollutants](#) (POPs) are bad news. These chemicals are highly toxic, travel long distances on wind and water currents, and accumulate in the environment, up the food chain and in the bodies of animals and people. More bad news — climate change is making the impact of POPs worse. A recently released U.N. report, [“Climate Change and POPs: Predicting the Impacts.”](#) says that releases of POPs trapped in soil, water and ice will increase due to rising global temperatures. One example: glaciers melting faster means more of the POPs trapped in those glaciers are being re-released more quickly.

These POPs — pesticides including DDT, endosulfan and lindane, for example — threaten the health of humans and other animals who eat near the top of the global food chain. This impact is particularly severe for people living in Northern latitudes such as Arctic Indigenous people. According to PAN partner [Alaska Community Action on Toxics](#), which works closely with Indigenous communities, the dispersal of POPs contaminants into freshwater and marine environments directly affects the health of fish and marine mammals that serve as the primary traditional foods for these Indigenous peoples. The U.N. report says that:

Persistent organic pollutants are known to have negative health effects on humans, such as cardiovascular disease, immunosuppression, metabolic disorders, cancer, and neurobehavioral, endocrine and reproductive effects. If climate change results in an increase in exposure to POPs, this would increase the risks related to their harmful effects.

The study also suggests that the expected increase in the incidence of vector-borne diseases (such as malaria) associated with climate change may increase demand for and release of the controversial POPs pesticide DDT in some regions. Though banned for agricultural uses around the world, DDT is still available for malaria vector control through the Stockholm Convention.

Released recently in Nairobi, the UN study is the first systematic and authoritative review of the impact of climate change on the release of POPs into the environment. It concludes that climate change threatens to undermine the U.N.’s efforts to reduce global exposures to POPs. The full study will be presented to the 5th meeting of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention in April 2011. PAN will be there to report back to you on the global community’s response to this study.

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