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# The Green Blog

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## How Much Do You Love That Dirty Water?

Posted by Bina Venkataraman February 5, 2009 07:01 PM

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**SPECIAL NOTE:** Thanks to the anonymous commenter for pointing out my song lyric headline typo! I'm duly embarrassed...

If you went outside today, you may have trouble imagining that global temperatures are rising at a catastrophic rate. But a panel of the state's best thinkers when it comes to climate change -- scientists, economists, policymakers -- gathered today to talk about what they are almost certain will pose a big threat to the Bay State in the decades to come.

How might Boston fare if we keep pumping out carbon dioxide at this rate?

Boston is lucky compared to some coastal cities because the Charles River Dam protects us from storm surges. But more frequent storms and sea level rise are likely to push water above the dam, say climate specialists, so we better prepare to build it higher.

More than a few local and regional scientists predict that a likely scenario is that Bostonians could see The New England Aquarium submerged underwater in this century. This is based on their prediction that the 100-year coastal flood cycle could turn to a 15-year (or less) flood cycle by as early as 2035.

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Lest you think that an underwater aquarium is good news for Massachusetts marine life, the leaders of today's climate symposium warned of bad times to come for ocean life -- and fishermen.

Even if global warming were not a factor, the oceans are absorbing carbon dioxide that comes from our power plants and cars. That gas is already making the ocean more acidic, preventing creatures like coral and shellfish from forming the hard shells they need to survive and thrive.

"We call this osteoporosis," said Paul Epstein of Harvard's School of Public Health.

But this won't only hurt the fish.

New England's fishing industry brings in \$1 billion in annual revenue, about 80% of which comes from shellfish.

Of course, acidic oceans aren't bad for all marine life. Jellyfish, for example, are thriving as a result of high carbon dioxide levels.

Anyone up for a swim?

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1. Love that \*dirty\* water...!

Posted by [Anonymous](#) February 6, 09 01:51 PM

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