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Warming concerns Congress

By **ASHLEI N. STEVENS**, Ashlei.stevens@shj.com

Imagine the fertile lands, or "bread baskets," of America becoming barren deserts.

There's a chance global warming ultimately could make that happen, and an Upstate congressman is supporting research efforts that could postpone the negative effects of global warming.

U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis flew to Greenland late Thursday night and will return Monday. He's joined by seven other members of Congress, who are taking a helicopter tour of the Arctic region and meeting with researchers who have been observing changes in the climate.

He hosted a live phone conference Friday afternoon with a few professors from Converse College and the University of South Carolina Upstate. Price Atkinson, spokesman for Inglis' office, said the teleconference was an opportunity for Inglis to relate what he has seen first-hand to science professors who, in turn, can pass this information along to their students.

"We need to continue to inspire elementary, middle and high school students to go into science and play a role in these breakthroughs that are so desperately needed," Inglis, R-S.C., said. "The world needs to find those breakthroughs, and we've got incredible opportunities if we continue to find them."

The weekend tour of Greenland is being led by the director of the National Science Foundation. The federal government spends about \$5 billion annually on NSF projects, and Inglis said it's important that this type of research on climate change continues.

"We really should celebrate the scientific research and realize that America is helping to lead this effort in probing the causes of climate change," he said. "That's something we can be thankful about and aware that Americans play a very important role in the world."

Inglis is a former chair of the Science Research Subcommittee. Last January, he took a trip to Antarctica, where he shared photos and information with Spartanburg High School students via a phone conference.

"The trip to Antarctica was a fabulous learning experience and, likewise, this one is going to be very helpful in the continuing discussion about climate change in Washington and in the global discussion," Inglis said.

"It's interesting to see some of the similarities and differences."

Thus far in Greenland, where the temperature is about 50 degrees, Inglis said he's learned that the melting ice is a major point of concern, as it changes whale patterns and salmon breeding patterns. Species that aren't Arctic species are even showing up in Greenland, he said.

"That's evidence that something's happening. It's fairly clear that phenomenon is related to an increase in greenhouses gases," he said.

Some good news is that researchers have found less soot in the ice than in previous years, which means there's likely been a decline in pollutants.

On Friday, Inglis' "students" included Douglas Jensen, chair of the biology department at Converse College, and professors Jack Turner and Ron Sobczak from USC Upstate.

For Sobczak, a chemistry professor, the phone interview was helpful because it allowed him to hear that Inglis is concerned about environmental issues. Sobczak is also group chair of the Bartram Sierra Club of Greenville and Spartanburg, whose mission is to protect the environment. Inglis sat down in person with the club members earlier this week to discuss global warming and two proposed energy bills.

"Rep. Inglis has been good on the environment. He's been forward-thinking on that," Sobczak said. "We need allies in that."

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