



## The Ice Chronicles

*Lynn Margulis, Frank White, Paul Andrew Mayewski*

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"ON 1 JULY 1993, AT 2:48 PM LOCAL, THE U.S. GREENLAND ICE SHEET PROJECT TWO (GISP2) LOCATED IN CENTRAL GREENLAND . . . STRUCK ROCK. THIS COMPLETES THE LONGEST ENVIRONMENTAL RECORD . . . EVER OBTAINED FROM AN ICE CORE IN THE WORLD AND THE LONGEST SUCH RECORD POSSIBLE FROM THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE." -- Message from Greenland Ice Sheet Project Two posted Thursday, July 1, 1993

Almost a decade ago, Paul Andrew Mayewski, an internationally-recognized leader in climate change research, was chosen to lead the National Science Foundation's Greenland Ice Sheet Project Two (GISP2). He and his colleagues put together, literally from scratch, a massive scientific research project involving 25 universities, inventing new techniques for extracting information from the longest ice cores ever from the planet's harshest environments. His book -- equally a scientific explanation of startling new discoveries, an account of how researchers actually work, and a depiction of real life scientific adventure -- arrestingly depicts the contemporary world of climate change research.

The Ice Chronicles tells the story behind GISP2, and its product 100,000 years of climate history. These amazing frozen records document major environmental events such as volcanoes and forest fires. They also reveal the dramatic influence that humans have had on the chemistry of the atmosphere and climate change through major additions of greenhouse gases, acid rain, and stratospheric ozone depletion.

Perhaps the most startling new information gleaned from these records is the knowledge that natural climate is far from stable; quite the opposite -- major, fast changes in climate are found throughout the record. It now appears that Earth's climate changes dramatically every few thousand years, often within the span of a decade. Data gathered through ice core analysis challenge traditional assumptions of how climate operates. Further, the authors show that climate conditions over the past several thousand years, which we take for granted as normal, may in fact be significantly different from that in the previous 100,000 years. New data suggest that relatively balmy conditions allowing the flowering of human civilization since the last Ice Age are not the norm for the last few hundred thousand years. Yet despite the apparent mild state of climate for the last 10,000 years there have still been changes sufficient to contribute substantially to the course of civilization. We live in a changing climate that could under certain circumstances change even more dramatically.

While not a book about policy, the authors find it impossible to ignore the fact that scientific research is, or should be, the underpinning of effective environmental policy. Recognizing that environmental and climate change can no longer be separated from politics and policy, the authors suggest a new approach, drawing upon the insights of ice core research. They present scientifically-grounded principles relevant to policy makers and the public about living with the potentially unstable climatic situation the future will most likely bring.

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