

EARTHWEEK: A DIARY OF THE PLANET

By Steve Newman

Glacier Warning



The U. S. Science Foundation announced that rapid worldwide coastal flooding could result if recent halts in Antarctic ice flows cause ice sheets to crash into the ocean. The report said that the flow of two major ice streams feeding the West Antarctic Ice Sheet has stopped. This could cause the massive glacier to recede, become unstable and collapse into the ocean in chunks during the coming decades. Other scientists have warned of coastal flooding if the greenhouse effect continues, and melts the polar ice caps. This week's report by glaciologists, oceanographers and climatologists said that the potential for flooding under this new scenario is far more dangerous, because it would be sudden.

African Floods



The worst flooding in Tanzania in 50 years washed away several villages and left 54 people dead. Thousands of acres of the vital cassava crop were ruined, and food supplies in this famine-prone East African country were threatened.

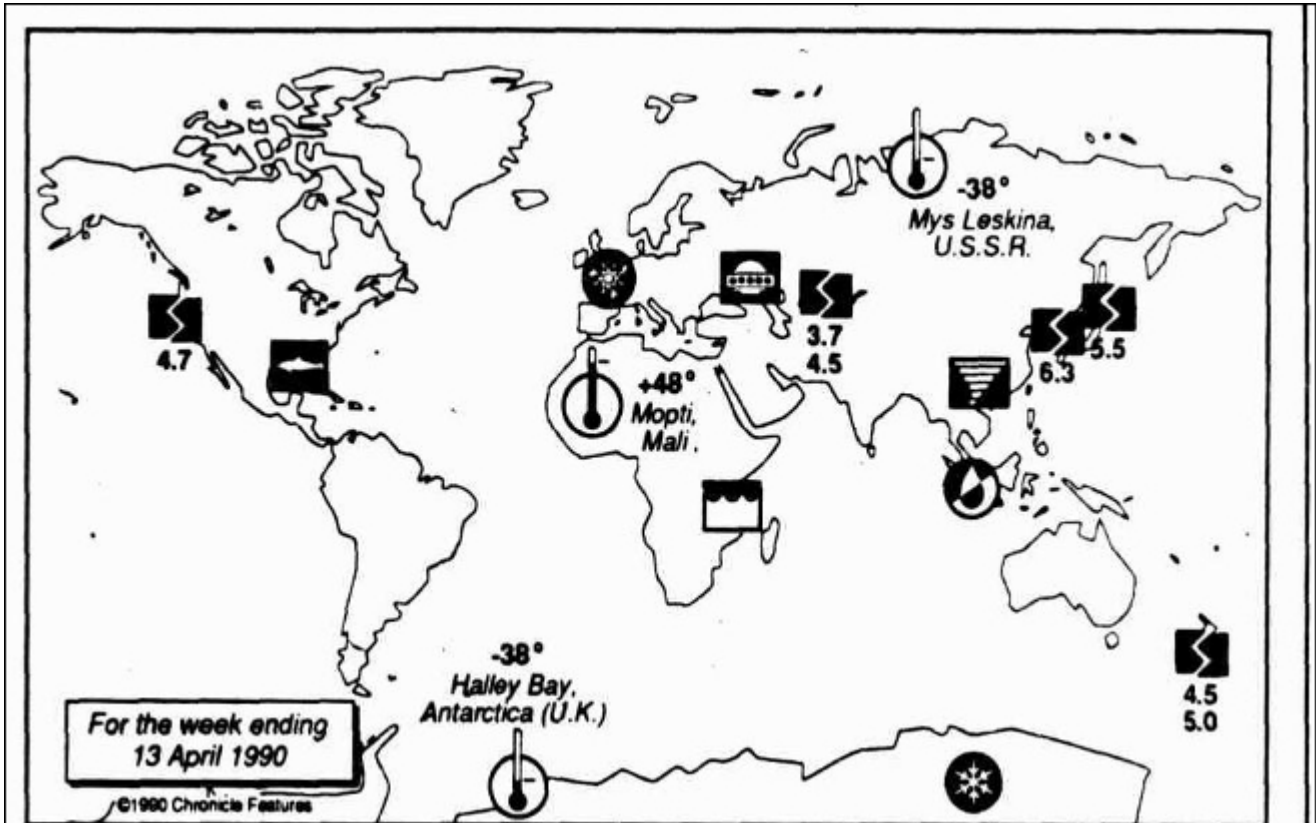
In neighboring Kenya, heavy rains battered areas around the capital of Nairobi. Some drivers in the annual Safari Rally were stranded by the flooding. For the first time since 1958,

flooding. For the first time since 1958, all cars may be prevented from finishing the gruelling six-day race.

Earthquakes



An afternoon of tremors in the San Francisco Bay Area was followed by a moderate quake that caused slight damage around Concord and Walnut Creek. Two strong earthquakes were felt in many areas of central and northern Japan, but no significant damage or injuries were reported. New Zealand was rocked by two quakes just four hours apart. Earth movements were also felt in southern Kazakhstan.



Dolphin Pneumonia



Tests on some of the more than 200 dolphins found dead along the northern Gulf of Mexico coast since December suggest that pneumonia may have killed them. Gerald Regan, a marine biologist at Spring Hill College in Mobile, Ala., couldn't tell for certain if the pneumonia was viral or bacterial, or even if it was the actual cause of death. His findings were the first clues to a mystery that has caused government officials to halt all capture of dolphins in the Gulf by researchers and others. Earlier theories have ranged from the presence of algal bloom to the excessive cold during late December.

Atmospheric Ozone



Man-made chemicals are not only eating away at the protective ozone layer high above Earth, but also are causing dangerous concentrations of the gas close to the surface, according to a

British study. Scientists at Harwell Laboratory said their measurements showed levels of harmful ozone in the lower atmosphere, or troposphere, have more than doubled in the past 100 years. Ozone causes oxidation, a chemical reaction that damages plants and animals, and corrodes metal. The atmospheric scientists compared recent measurements of the gas to similar observations made in Paris between 1876 and 1910.

Sino Cyclone

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A massive atmospheric disturbance passing over eastern Asia lashed much of China with strong winds and hail storms, and spawned the second killer tornado there in two weeks. Sixteen people died when the twister raked Yangjiang, 430 km southwest of Hong Kong. The official Xinhua news agency reported that a huge hailstone produced by the severe thunderstorms weighed more than

five kilograms and measured 61 cm across.

Drought



Officials in Singapore made final plans for mandatory restrictions on water use as an extended dry spell continued. Residents had failed to comply with earlier requests to reduce water consumption. Little rain has fallen in the tiny country since last December.

Soviet Sightings



Soviet pilots, air traffic controllers and hundreds of residents in the Volga city of Ulyanovsk saw an unidentified flying object hovering above the city between 8:30 and 9:00 p.m. on April 6. Witnesses say it looked like a blue-green ball, and seemed to be larger than the apparent size of the moon.

Additional Sources: U. S. Climate Analysis Center, U. S. Earthquake Information Center

*Center, U. S. Earthquake Information Center
and the World Meteorological Organization.*