ALIENS MAY BE LAST HOPE FOR HAWAII

Invasive birds are now the main reason some native forests thrive.

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SNAPSHOT Return of the geysers

Four months after a landslide dumped 4.5 million cubic metres of rock and mud into Russia's Valley of Geysers, two geysers have re-emerged, and others may be on their way, researchers say.

Of the 41 notable geysers in the valley, which is situated on the eastern side of the Kamchatka Peninsula, 9 were buried directly by the 3 June landslide. Another 13 were submerged when debris dammed a river. But water levels in the resulting lake have since dropped, revealing two previously submerged geysers — the dramatic 'Bolshoi' (great) geyser and the colourful 'Malachite grotto'. Meanwhile, steam is beginning to puff up around debris clogging a third geyser, says Laura Williams of conservation group the WWF.

Initial reports of the landslide worried Tamas Torok, a microbiologist at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in California, who regularly visits the region to study the its unique microbial climate. "They said the

Valley of Geysers was destroyed," he says. But on a recent visit, he found that many of his research sites had escaped unharmed.

Some microbiologists have adapted to the landslide by redefining their research goals,

says Christopher Romanek, a biogeochemist at the University of Georgia in Athens: "Now we want to go out there and take samples to try to understand how these systems rebound after a catastrophe."

Heidi Ledford

Cool reaction to Bush's climate summit

H. N. GHANBARI/AP

The inaugural climate summit hosted by President George W. Bush in Washington DC last week was greeted with cautious optimism from some scientists. But his continued insistence on voluntary measures for reducing greenhouse-gas emissions met with intense scepticism from international delegates and observers. And although Bush underscored the risks posed by global warming in a public speech on 28 September, many scientists and advocates say his administration continues to oppose actions necessary to mitigate the problem.

Peter Cox, a climate modeller at the University of Exeter, UK, says he is pleased that the United States is now "raising the flag" on global warming, abandoning a previous stance that, he says, amounted to denial. "Essentially, what we had before was the uncertainties in the long-term projections, which are always going to be there, being used as a reason for inaction," Cox says. "It is a relief that people are talking about the need for action despite the fact that there are still significant uncertainties."

But in the first US-government-hosted climate summit, Bush offered no specific targets or solutions, aside from the establishment of an international fund to promote clean-energy

Bush favours a voluntary approach to lowering emissions, but others say this will be ineffective.

projects in the developing world and a general endorsement of technology as the best solution. "There is a way forward that will enable us to grow our economies and protect the environment, and that's called technology," he said. The administration, which invited developing nations to the talks, also continued to push for voluntary measures that could be designed and implemented at the national level. This was seen as another effort to draw support from developing nations, whose emissions are increasing sharply, and are expected to con-

tinue to do so in the coming decades.

"You can't solve this problem on voluntary measures. It's a fraud," says climatologist Stephen Schneider, from Stanford University in California, who says that even immediate action might not prevent a rise of 2 °C above pre-industrial levels. "The science is very clear that unless we are incredibly lucky or there is an incredible breakthrough, we are going to be well over 2 °C," he adds. "The impact-assessment folks say that is when you are going to have all sorts of nasty stuff."

John Ashton, the UK climate-change envoy attending the summit, criticized the Bush administration for failing to suggest a target for the United Nations' climate negotiations that are scheduled for December in Bali, Indonesia. Many European countries are calling for a treaty that would require emissions cuts of more than 50% by 2050. "If you accept the science, if you want to be taken seriously as accepting the science, you have to be willing to say to the international community where you think the threshold of dangerous climate change lies," Ashton says. "It's very hard to reconcile that refusal to say what the goal should be with a position of leadership."

Jeff Tollefson