

2012 one of 10 warmest on record

By Neela Banerjee, Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON – Last year was one of the 10 hottest since global average temperatures have been recorded, according to an assessment of worldwide climate trends by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

“The State of the Climate in 2012,” released Tuesday, paints a sobering portrait of vast swaths of the planet transformed by rising temperatures. Arctic sea ice reached record lows during the summer thaw. In Greenland, about 97% of its ice sheet melted in the summer, far greater than in years past.

Greenhouse gas emissions continued to rise. In early May, the ratio of carbon dioxide in the Earth’s atmosphere surpassed 400 parts per million in an average daily reading at Hawaii’s Mauna Loa Observatory, thought to be the highest concentration in millions of years.

The report is a like “an annual check-up for the planet,” said Kathryn Sullivan, undersecretary of Commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA’s acting administrator. It documents “remarkable changes” in crucial areas like Arctic ice, sea levels and greenhouse gas emissions, she said.

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