



The world's oceans are turning acidic at what could be the fastest pace of any time in the past 300 million years, even more rapidly than during a monster emission of planet-warming carbon 56 million years ago, scientists said on Thursday.

Looking back at that bygone warm period in Earth's history could offer help in forecasting the impact of human-spurred climate change, researchers said of a review of hundreds of studies of ancient climate records published in the journal *Science*.

Quickly acidifying seawater eats away at coral reefs, which provide habitat for other animals and plants, and makes it harder for mussels and oysters to form protective shells. It can also interfere with small organisms that feed commercial fish like salmon.

The phenomenon has been a top concern of Jane Lubchenco, the head of the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, who has conducted demonstrations about acidification during hearings in the U.S. Congress.

Oceans get more acidic when more carbon gets into the atmosphere. In pre-industrial times, that occurred periodically in natural pulses of carbon that also pushed up global temperatures, the scientists wrote.

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