The environmental news has been coming fast this week. There's too much for me to keep up with all of it, but here are some stories worth checking out.

Time for federal bee regulation? The AP reports (in the LA Times) that the Xerces Society, Natural Resources Defense Council, Defenders of Wildlife and a UC Davis entomologist have petitioned the USDA to prohibit shipping of domesticated bumblebees and hives outside their native range, and to certify that domesticated bumblebees are disease free. Domesticated bees, the petitioners argue, spread diseases to native wild bees, contributing to steep declines in several native species.

Interior promises Cape Wind decision by April. Shortly after the National Park Service declared Nantucket Sound eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar said he would make a decision about whether to approve the contentious Cape Wind offshore wind energy project within months. The New York Times, which describes the decision as "a signal test of the Obama administration's commitment to renewable energy projects on public lands and off the nation's shorelines," believes the available signals point toward approval.

A mediocre grade for the administration. The Center for Progressive Reform has issued a report card evaluating the first-year performance of key health and safety agencies (Consumer Product Safety Commission, EPA, FDA, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and OSHA), and the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, which reviews agency rules before they are issued. The conclusion: "Overall, we found that the Obama Administration has not yet lived up to its own vision of protective and proactive government and would give its efforts to date an overall grade of B-." (Full disclosure — I am a member scholar of CPR, but had no involvement in this report.)

Melting ice and rising seas. A new study (published in Proceedings of the Royal Society, reported in New Scientist) finds that a major glacier at the edge of the West Antarctic ice sheet is past its tipping point and poised for collapse. According to the study's authors, that alone could raise global sea levels by 24 centimeters (more than 9 inches). This latest study reinforces the argument of Rob Young and Orrin Pilkey that the world should plan for sea level rise of seven feet by the end of this century.

Cap and dividend proposal in California. The Economic and Allocation Advisory

Committee, a panel appointed to provide advice on implementation of AB 32, California's greenhouse gas emission reduction law, has recommended that three-quarters of the revenues from allowance auctions be returned to consumers through tax cuts or annual dividend checks. Our own Rick Frank is a member of that Committee. I hope he'll explain this development in more detail.