

## Massive Alaska glacier is melting at fast pace

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The largest and longest glacier in North America is melting faster than previously believed, releasing an enormous amount of water each year into the Gulf of Alaska.

So says the Ann Arbor-based Michigan Tech Research Institute, which used sensors on Alaska's 120-mile-long Bering Glacier and satellite imagery to reach its findings, released Friday.

The research found that the glacier is releasing about 30 cubic kilometers of water a year. By

comparison, the entire volume of Lake St. Clair is about 4 cubic kilometers.

Researchers wouldn't speculate on whether the glacier's retreat is caused by a long-term trend — such as global warming — or part of a natural cycle, but the results suggest conditions that would affect currents, the climate and aquatic life in the northern Pacific.

Institute codirector Robert Shuchman said Friday that the melt rate could also suggest that Alaska's glaciers could contribute to the world's oceans an amount of fresh water rivaling

that of Greenland, where melting has raised concerns of worldwide climate change.

"Our analysis is starting to lend credence to that," he said.

Ed Josberger, a research oceanographer with the U.S. Geological Service's Washington Water Science Center who worked on the project, said there is no doubt the melt rates on the Bering Glacier "are very high" and that the glacier is retreating by about one-third of a mile a year.

Rising from sea level to an altitude of some 5,000 feet, the Bering Glacier represents more than 15% of all the ice in Alaska.

