

September 2009 Sea Ice Outlook: July Report
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Extent Projection

4.73 million sq. km. (stdev. 0.48, min. 3.99, max. 5.75)

Methods / Techniques

Informal inquiry of 19 climate scientists on June 1, 2009

Rationale

Our estimate should be considered an “expert opinion.” Although some of the climate scientists contributing to our estimate did use statistics to inform their guess, many just went with their “gut.”

This is the second year that I have assembled guesses for the September ice extent. Interest came from discussion of sea ice conditions at our lunch table. The discussion has involved both researchers intimately involved in sea ice research, and researchers who have no specific knowledge of sea ice processes, but have experience in climate research.

Discussion this year has focused on the vulnerability of the ice pack due to long-term thinning and the record-low 2007/2008 ice extent minima, the fast pace of the ice loss in May 2009, and on the importance of the unpredictable summer weather conditions.

For reference, our 2008 mean guess (N=15) was 4.67 million sq km. Thus, our 2008 estimate was within the observational uncertainty of the observed 2008 September ice extent.

Although our methods are very different than those used for other groups participating in the sea ice outlook, we think that they provide an interesting contrast.