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What were the main factors driving the minimum extent this year?
The increasing thinnest of the ice. A record minimum was avoided because the winds never piled the ice in one direction like in 2007.

What additional data or data products (including data integration) would be useful for improving outlooks in the future, including any critical gaps in field observations?
The main deterrent for making accurate predictions is the lack of accurate weather forecasts, which we will never have.

How could the Outlook be used to better evaluate predictive models of arctic sea ice?
Much better evaluations of the prediction errors are essential. All forecasts without an error bar should be relegated to a separate category. All forecasts should have a clear indictation of the error bar and the method used for determining it. Best is to use past forecasts made independently of more recent data...in other wards for an empirical method it is not the "error in the fit" but forecast made outside of the fit interval. Maybe all methods should make their forecasts available for the last 10 or 20 years. Also more emphasis should be made on shorter 1 or 2 month forecasts where we might have a little skill (maybe). skill for each method could be evaluated for different lead times. The only way the Outlook can have any scientific value is to have such coordinated "cook offs". Otherwise it is just for fun.

How can we make the Outlook more relevant or usable for a wide variety of users and stakeholders?
Drop the total sea ice extent altogether to focus attention on the regional forecasts and make specific regional forecast targets (ie ice extent in the Beaufort, or date of opening of navigation at some location...the exact quantity to be forecast would have to be well defined)