



Witness The **ARCTIC**

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SEARCH Meeting Advances New SEARCH Goals and Implementation Strategy

The SEARCH Science Steering Committee (SSC) and representatives from several government agencies (see sidebar) met 13-15 February 2012 in Washington, D.C. Over the last several months, the SEARCH SSC has developed a new SEARCH vision statement and draft 5-year science goals with input from SEARCH panels and agency representatives. The goal of the SEARCH meeting in February was for the SSC and agencies to further refine the 5-year science goals and develop a plan of action.



Study of Environmental Arctic Change

The outcomes of the meeting included:

1. Agreement on 5-year science goals that align with agency missions and meet pressing scientific priorities identified through the scientific community and agency information needs.
2. Agreement on a small set of projects to begin implementation of portions of the 5-year goals and showcase interagency collaboration.
3. Agreement on the core elements of an implementation strategy for SEARCH, which will be developed into a detailed plan after the meeting, with input from the broader scientific community and federal and state agencies.
4. Input and recommendations for the U.S. Arctic Observing Coordination Workshop that will include a discussion of an implementation strategy pertaining to the Arctic Observing Network (see: <http://www.arcus.org/search/meetings/2012/coordination-workshop>).

The SEARCH goals will be distributed to the wider arctic science community in April for input via [ArcticInfo](http://www.arcus.org/arcticinfo/index.html) (<http://www.arcus.org/arcticinfo/index.html>).

More information about the meeting, including the agenda, list of attendees, and background material, is available at: <http://www.arcus.org/search/meetings/2012/ssc-february>.

For more information about SEARCH activities, visit the SEARCH website at: <http://www.arcus.org/search/> or contact Helen Wiggins, ARCUS, at helen@arcus.org.

U.S. Federal Agencies Represented at the SEARCH SSC meeting:

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

U.S. Department of the Interior

U.S. Coast Guard

Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Office of Polar Programs, National Science Foundation

U.S. Arctic Research Commission

Office of Biological and Environmental Research,

U.S. Department of Energy

Arctic Studies Center, Smithsonian Institution

Office of Naval Research

Office of Science and Technological Policy, Executive Office of the President

Office of Ocean and Polar Affairs, U.S. Department of State

National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior

North Slope Science Initiative

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

In Remembrance of Dr. Deanna Kingston

Dr. Deanna Paniataaq Kingston, professor of anthropology at Oregon State University (OSU) and prominent arctic social scientist, died 2 December 2011 at the age of 47. A native Inupiat from King Island, Alaska, Dr. Kingston was a pioneer in exploring the intersections of native traditional knowledge and western science.

Dr. Kingston received a masters of arts in interdisciplinary studies from OSU in 1993 and a doctorate from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks in 1999. Her work included research on traditional kinship patterns, songs, and hunting dances. One of her projects, a film collection of last-century King Island life, is housed at the National Museum of Natural History. Her early work was notable for developing a new concept for the way arctic social science could be done, in which arctic communities could contribute through participation in the design of the research, collaboration with scientists on the fieldwork, and assisting in the analysis of the data.



Deanna Paniataaq Kingston, 47, a professor of anthropology at Oregon State University and a prominent pioneer in Arctic social sciences. Image Courtesy: Deanna Kingston

In 2003 Dr. Kingston received an NSF grant to document and compare western scientific knowledge with the traditional ecological knowledge of King Island. This work culminated in the King Island Placenames Project, an interactive website that documents the cultural geography, biogeography, and traditional ecological knowledge of King Island, Alaska. The contributions to social science from her work on King Island are widely praised as a lasting legacy. At her death, Dr. Kingston was the principal investigator on two NSF grants: one on “Indigenous-State Relations in Alaska and Beyond” and the other on “Indigenous Ecological Knowledges and Geographic Information Systems.”

Dr. Kingston served on NSF’s Office of Polar Programs Advisory Committee and also on the SEARCH Responding to Change panel. She participated in numerous workshops and conferences including the 2005 workshop, “Designing an Arctic Observing Network,” in Copenhagen, Denmark.

For further information about Dr. Kingston’s contributions to arctic social science, please see: http://www.nsf.gov/news/news_summ.jsp?cntn_id=122590&org=NSF&from=news.

Planning Underway for U.S. Arctic GEOTRACES Initiative

The U.S. GEOTRACES Science Steering Committee (SSC) has launched a planning effort for a U.S. Arctic GEOTRACES initiative to help characterize and understand regional biogeochemical changes associated with rapid climate change. The initiative includes a cruise, which is tentatively planned for 2015. The SSC has scheduled several informational meetings to update the community on the planning process and solicit input from attendees.

GEOTRACES is an international program whose mission is to identify processes and quantify fluxes that control the distributions of key trace elements and isotopes in the ocean, and to establish the sensitivity of these distributions to changing environmental conditions. The Arctic Ocean, where rapid climate change and accompanying biogeochemical responses are occurring, has been of particular interest to the program. The rapidly warming climate may have a profound impact on the carbon budget, geochemical cycles, and arctic ecosystems. These changes are predicted to affect global systems through feedback mechanisms related to processes such as melting ice and the release of carbon from permafrost.

The goal of the U.S. Arctic GEOTRACES planning effort is to develop an international field campaign using multiple icebreakers to sample the Arctic Ocean. Several nations, including Sweden, Canada, and Germany, have expressed interest in participating in this effort. Canada, for example, has scheduled a planning workshop for 2-4 May 2012 in Vancouver, British Columbia; and the U.S. has scheduled a community implementation workshop for 13-15 June 2012 in Washington, D.C. These meetings and workshops, funded in part by NSF, are open to anyone interested in the biogeochemical cycles of trace elements and their isotopes within the arctic region.

Reports from previous international and U.S. GEOTRACES arctic planning workshops can be found at: http://www.obs-lyfr.fr/GEOTRACES/libraries/documents/Arctic_Report.pdf and <http://www.usgeotraces.org/documents/arcticDOC/ArcticWorkshopRpt.pdf>.

For further information about the GEOTRACES program, please see: <http://www.geotraces.org>.

For questions about the U.S. Arctic GEOTRACES initiative, please contact David Kadko (dkadko@rsmas.miami.edu).

Public Comment Period Extended for Draft National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan

The National Ocean Council has extended the public comment period on the draft National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan through 28 March 2012. This extension will provide stakeholders, users, and the public additional time to provide input to inform development of the final Implementation Plan.

The draft Implementation Plan is part of President Obama's "National Policy for the Stewardship of the Ocean, Our Coasts, and the Great Lakes." The draft plan does not encompass all Federal actions relating to ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes matters; rather, it focuses on the nine priority objectives highlighted under the National Ocean Policy. For each of the nine objectives, a suite of actions and their intended outcomes are described. For each action, key milestones are outlined, lead agencies or other responsible entities are identified, and time-frames are listed. This structure is designed to provide a clear layout of what will be accomplished and who will be engaged, as well as associated timelines.

Changing Conditions in the Arctic is the only priority objective that identifies a single region as an area of special focus. For further information, please see: *Witness* Fall 2011 [National Ocean Policy in the Arctic Region](http://www.arcus.org/witness-the-arctic/2011/3/article/1765) (<http://www.arcus.org/witness-the-arctic/2011/3/article/1765>).

For more information about the draft Implementation Plan and how to provide comment, please see: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/oceans/implementationplan>.

Accelerated Spending Requirements for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Funded Projects

The Division of Institution and Award Support in NSF's Policy Office has issued a notice of intent to limit the expenditure period for cooperative agreements funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to ensure project completion by 30 September 2013. This notice applies to all NSF awardees with active agreements that have been supported in whole or in part with ARRA funds.

This notice advises Principal Investigators (PIs), co-PIs, and awardee organizations of NSF's implementation of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) [Memorandum M-11-34 \(http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2011/m11-34.pdf\)](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2011/m11-34.pdf), "Accelerating Spending of Remaining Funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for Discretionary Grant Programs," which specifically directs federal agencies to take steps to ensure that awardees complete ARRA-funded projects by 30 September 2013. NSF will not have the authority to approve the extension of any cooperative agreement supported solely by ARRA funds, or to allow for any costs incurred by ARRA-funded activity beyond 30 September 2013.

Agencies have been directed to request waivers sparingly. Such requests must be based on criteria outlined in the OMB memo and follow established procedures. Awardees must contact their NSF Program Officer in writing by 9 March 2012 if they anticipate asking NSF to consider submitting a waiver request to OMB.

For further information or questions about the waiver request process, awardees, PIs, and co-PIs managing ARRA funded projects should contact the NSF program manager who manages their award.

For more information, please see Special Notices at: <http://www.nsf.gov>.

Office of Polar Programs Director Karl A. Erb to Retire

Dr. Karl A. Erb will retire from government service in April 2012 concluding over 13 years as Director of the Office of Polar Programs (OPP). Dr. Erb is widely recognized for his contributions to the international polar research community and for his leadership in the construction and operation of National Science Foundation (NSF) research facilities in the Arctic and Antarctic, which provide state-of-the-art capabilities to the frontiers of polar science and engineering.

Prior to his career with the NSF Dr. Erb was well known for his research in experimental nuclear physics. He served on the Yale University faculty from 1972 to 1980 and on the staff of Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee from 1980 to 1986. Dr. Erb came to NSF in 1986 as a Program Officer in the Physics Division. From 1989 to 1992 he served in the White House Office of Science and Technology as Assistant and Associate Director for Physical Sciences. Dr. Erb returned to NSF in 1993 as Senior Science Advisor to the NSF Director, during which time he oversaw the review process leading to construction of a new research station at the South Pole.

In 1998 Dr. Erb was appointed Director of the OPP. During his tenure, construction was completed on major research facilities in the Antarctic, including the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station and the IceCube Neutrino Observatory; and in the Arctic, including upgraded NSF research facilities at Toolik Field Station in Alaska and Summit Station in Greenland. He also led U.S. efforts during the International Polar Year (IPY 2007-2009), strengthening coordination with other agencies and expanding international partnerships in support of polar research.

Dr. Erb served as U.S. representative to the International Arctic Science Committee Regional Board from 1999 to 2006 and as the elected President of the Council of Managers of the National Antarctic Programs from 2001 to 2003. In recognition of his work building international partnerships to facilitate research projects, Dr. Erb was named the first recipient of the New Zealand Antarctic Medal in 2006 and was invested as Chevalier in the French Legion of Merit in 2007. He is recognized for his leadership on national and international polar research boards and was named Presidential Rank Distinguished Senior Executive in 2005 in acknowledgement of “sustained extraordinary accomplishment in management of programs of the U.S. Government and for leadership exemplifying the highest standards of service to the public.”

Dr. Erb plans to stay involved in the polar research community and is currently Chair of the Science Advisory Board of the Arctic Centre at the University of Lapland.

Dr. Kelly Falkner will serve as Acting Head for OPP effective 1 April 2012. Further information is included in this issue of *Witness*. See: [Staffing Changes \(http://www.arcus.org/witness-the-arctic/2012/1/article/13536\)](http://www.arcus.org/witness-the-arctic/2012/1/article/13536).



Dr. Karl A. Erb

Staffing Changes in the Office of Polar Programs and Arctic Sciences Division

Dr. Kelly Falkner will serve as Acting Head for NSF's Office of Polar Programs (OPP) effective 1 April 2012 subsequent to the retirement of Dr. Karl A. Erb. Prior to joining NSF as Deputy Head of OPP on 3 January 2011, Falkner was a professor in the College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences at Oregon State University. From 2007 to 2009 she served at NSF as the founding program director of the Antarctic Integrated System Science program in OPP. Falkner holds a PhD in Chemical Oceanography.

Dr. Brendan P. Kelly is now on detail from NSF serving as Assistant Director for Polar Science in the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) within the Executive Office of the President of the United States. His portfolio includes coordinating activities assigned to the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC), such as the development of a five-year arctic research plan. (See: [IARPC 5-Year Plan \(http://www.arcus.org/witness-the-arctic/2012/1/article/6254\)](http://www.arcus.org/witness-the-arctic/2012/1/article/6254).) Prior to early January 2012 Kelly served as Deputy Director in NSF's Division of Arctic Sciences (ARC). Arctic Sciences Division Director Simon Stephenson will now represent NSF on the IARPC staff level. NSF Director Subra Suresh continues as Chair of the IARPC.

Dr. Erica Key is the newly appointed Arctic Observing Network (AON) Program Director. The AON position is a limited-term position. Prior to early February 2012 Key served as Arctic System Science (ARCSS) Associate Program Manager.

The Office of Polar Programs often has openings for Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) appointees to serve term positions, assist with the management of OPP programs, and learn about the government funding process from the inside. For more information about IPA and rotator positions at NSF, see: http://www.nsf.gov/about/career_opps/rotators/index.jsp.

NSF Arctic Sciences Division Town Hall Meetings at AGU

The National Science Foundation Division of Arctic Sciences held two Town Halls on 7 December 2011 during the American Geophysical Union (AGU) fall meetings in San Francisco. The Town Hall meetings provided a forum for open exchange on NSF activities and directions. Nearly 100 people participated in these meetings.

The Arctic Research Support and Logistics (RLS) Town Hall meeting was comprised of reports and discussion on specific topics including RLS program structure, priorities, and budget; personnel; safety requirements; environmental compliance; and communication between NSF's Division of Arctic Sciences and the research community. Renée Crain and Pat Haggerty presented and led this meeting.

The Arctic Division Town Hall meeting included reports and discussions about budget allocations; highlights, locations, and topics of currently funded projects; future activities; and new and evolving NSF programs. Brendan P. Kelly and William Wiseman presented and led this meeting.

For further information about these meetings, and to download the presentations, please go to: <http://www.arcus.org/communitymeetings/agu/2011/town-hall-meetings> or contact Renée Crain (rcrain@nsf.gov) or Brendan P. Kelly (Brendan_P_Kelly@ostp.eop.gov).

Update on Funding for NSF’s Office of Polar Programs and Arctic Sciences Division

On 18 November 2011 the President signed into law the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2012. Division B of the Act provides funding for Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies for fiscal year (FY) 2012, which began 1 October 2011. Although final agency budget reports are not yet available, the estimated National Science Foundation (NSF) funding level is \$7 billion, which is an increase of \$173 million (2.5%) from the FY 2011 enacted level. The estimated FY 2012 budget for the Office of Polar Programs (OPP) is \$435.87 million. The estimated allocation for the Arctic Science Division (ARC) is \$102.76 million, which is \$3.1 million less than the actual FY 2011 level.

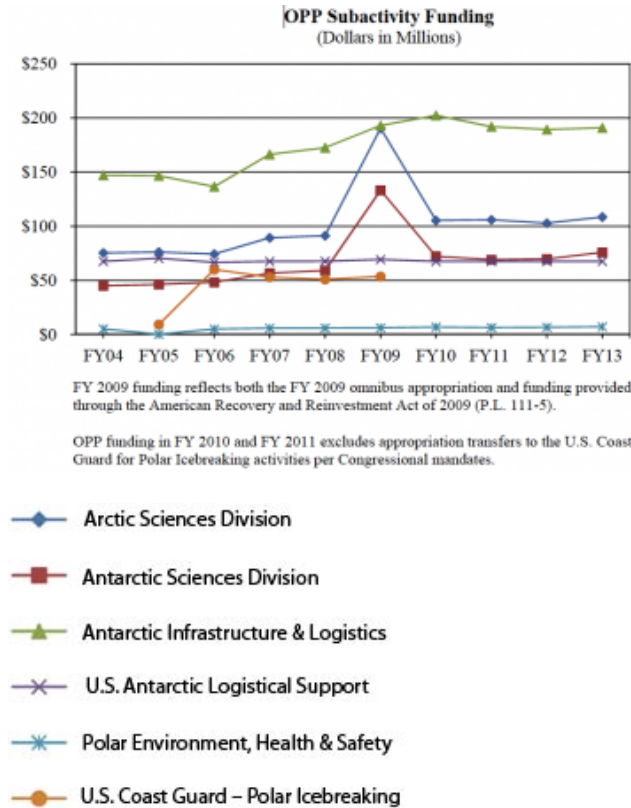


Image courtesy: NSF’s FY 2013 Budget Request to Congress - Office of Polar Programs.

The Obama Administration’s FY 2013 budget request, released 13 February 2012, calls for a \$13.7 million (3.2%) increase to OPP and a \$5.75 million (5.6%) increase to the ARC budgets over the FY 2012 estimated levels of funding. The request would provide an increase of \$5.61million (9.7%) to ARC funded research.

ARC funds a broad range of activities to provide an integrated understanding of environmental change in the Arctic, including the study of significant, system-scale environmental change and its human dimension. In general, 40% of the Arctic Science Division’s portfolio is available for new research grants, with 20% for continuing grants made in previous years and 40% for research support and logistics.

For additional information about the Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2012, please see: [Bill Summary & Status of H.R. 2112](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d112:h.r.2112:) (<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d112:h.r.2112:>).

For more information about NSF’s 2013 Budget Request to Congress, please see: <http://www.nsf.gov/about/budget>

[/fy2013/toc.jsp](#). For further details, please download the Office of Polar Program budget request: http://www.nsf.gov/about/budget/fy2013/pdf/13-OPP_fy2013.pdf.

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Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee Developing Five-Year Arctic Research Plan

The Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC) Principal Members met twice in 2011 to address an agenda that includes developing a five-year arctic research plan that will help federal agencies in implementing their arctic research programs. At their April meeting, Principal Members approved an outline for the research plan focusing on topics that will particularly benefit from multiagency collaboration. A draft of that plan was reviewed at the second Principal Members meeting in November 2011. During the following months, the IARPC staff, which includes staff members from ten Federal Agencies, refined the plan with participation from the Office of Science and Technology Policy, the Office of Management and Budget, the Marine Mammal Commission, and the U.S. Arctic Research Commission. A revised draft was sent to the Principal Members in February 2012 for agency review. The plan will be ready for public review in spring of 2012.

The draft research plan is based on a broad consensus in the national and international scientific communities that the most pressing scientific questions in the Arctic concern the consequences of rapid environmental change for ecosystems and societies. Diminishing sea ice cover is expected to have consequences for the global climate, diminishing ice sheets and glaciers will raise sea level, and thawing permafrost will impact infrastructure and may increase greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The draft five-year research plan considers changes in the physical environment, impacts on ecosystems, consequences for arctic inhabitants, and global consequences. It will focus attention on key questions concerning change in the cryosphere and address these questions in seven themes:

- Sea ice and marine ecosystem studies;
- Terrestrial ecosystem studies;
- Atmospheric studies affecting energy flux;
- Observing systems;
- Regional climate models;
- Adaptation tools for sustaining communities; and
- Human health.

The period for public review of the draft plan will be announced in early spring 2012. The public review process is expected to last for one month, and to include a webcast question-and-answer session. The five-year research plan will be revised after public review and published during the summer of 2012. The IARPC staff will begin implementation of the plan in accordance with the Arctic Research Policy Act of 1984.

For a complete list of the IARPC Principal Members, please see: http://www.nsf.gov/od/opp/arctic/iarpc/iarpc_principals2012.jsp.

The full notes from IARPC meetings are available at: http://www.nsf.gov/od/opp/arctic/iarpc/iarpc_mtgs_public.jsp.

For further information about IARPC, please see: <http://www.nsf.gov/od/opp/arctic/iarpc/start.jsp> or contact Brendan P. Kelly (bkelly@ostp.eop.gov) Assistant Director, Polar Science, Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Pew Report Recommends More Science in U.S. Arctic Ocean

The Pew Environment Group and Ocean Conservancy have released a white paper recommending further research to inform conservation and development decisions in America's Arctic Ocean. The white paper, authored by 14 arctic marine ecosystem scientists, evaluates the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Circular 1370, which summarizes gaps in Arctic Ocean research. The white paper is divided into two main parts. The first part assesses the adequacy of the USGS report and deems it to have identified major gaps in scientific knowledge in an unbiased manner. The second part of the white paper emphasizes the need to synthesize research completed in various disciplines to provide a better understanding of the ecosystem as a whole.

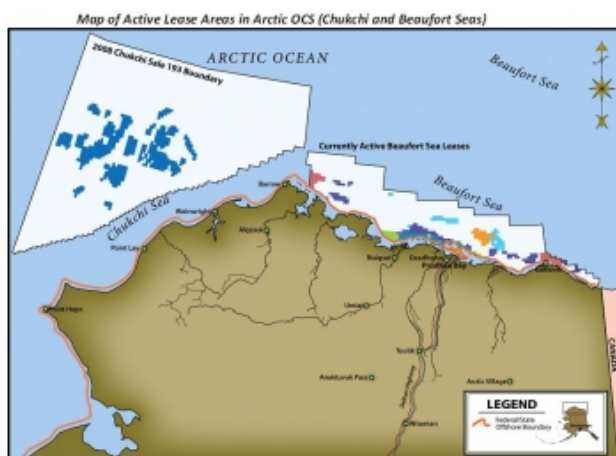


Image courtesy of Pew Environment Group

Recommendations in the white paper include:

- Making research data more accessible to the larger scientific community, policymakers, and the public. The white paper identified lack of access to data, some of it collected by oil industry scientists, as the most urgent issue emerging from the USGS report.
- Establishing long-term monitoring programs, including a series of stations at which physical, chemical, and biological data are continually collected for understanding ecosystem change.
- Identifying areas for protection. The white paper notes that enough information is now available to set aside certain critical habitat areas.
- Incorporating local and traditional knowledge of Alaska Native groups to provide insight into environmental trends and relationships that might not be available from other sources.

For further information about the Pew Environment Group recommendations, and to download the white paper and the USGS report, please see the Pew Environment Group [website \(http://www.pewenvironment.org/news-room/press-releases/closing-us-arctic-ocean-science-gaps-85899364429\)](http://www.pewenvironment.org/news-room/press-releases/closing-us-arctic-ocean-science-gaps-85899364429), or contact Mary Engel (mengel@pewtrusts.org).

Science and Conservation in the Arctic Offshore

By Henry Huntington

Science Director, Pew Environment Group Arctic Program

Loss of summer sea ice has increased access to arctic waters and warming is producing extensive biological change, making it more difficult to assess impacts from human activity in the short- and long-term. These rapid changes led the Pew Environment Group in 2009 to launch a new program promoting science- and community-based conservation of North America's Arctic Ocean.

In Alaska, Pew's work has focused primarily on offshore oil and gas activity. Pew advocates caution in the Chukchi and Beaufort seas, including more research and monitoring prior to the start of drilling. A great deal of research has been done in arctic waters, and Pew applauds the efforts of the scientists, funding agencies, and industries that have made it possible. But there is still a great need to fill gaps in scientific knowledge identified in the recent U.S. Geological Survey report (Circular 1370).

Pew commissioned 14 scientists, all experts in arctic marine ecosystems, to review the USGS report and recommend concrete next steps. The recommendations, released in a September 2011 white paper, included establishing long-term monitoring programs, incorporating local and traditional knowledge, and making research data more accessible to the larger scientific community, policymakers, and the public.

Such knowledge is needed to guide sound decision-making. For example, knowing that walrus are hauling out on land is important, but planning long-lasting coastal infrastructure so that it does not harm walrus depends on knowing something about future walrus distribution. Current models and projections simply are not able to offer much insight into where walrus are likely to be hauling out a decade from now. It is essential to improve the ability to assess likely environmental patterns in order to allow for sound, informed planning. To address this need, Pew is working with scientists to prepare analyses on topics relevant to decision-making.

One irony of the proliferation of arctic research is that it has become harder and harder to collect all the relevant findings and try to make sense of what they tell us about the ecosystem as a whole. Preparing syntheses across many projects, disciplines, and ecosystem components is important, but the methods for doing so remain in development. To help in this area, Pew has also supported synthesis efforts, such as the [Arctic Marine Biology Productivity Workshop \(http://www.iarc.uaf.edu/workshops/2011/arctic_marine_biology_productivity\)](http://www.iarc.uaf.edu/workshops/2011/arctic_marine_biology_productivity) in Fairbanks in February 2011, to examine likely trends in primary production in arctic waters.

NOAA Releases 2011 Arctic Report Card

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has released the 2011 Arctic Report Card. The report reflects the published and ongoing work of an international team of researchers and includes a range of arctic environmental observations. The report is organized around five chapters, which discuss changes observed in the atmosphere, sea ice and ocean, marine ecosystems, terrestrial ecosystems, and hydrology and terrestrial cryosphere.

Chapter highlights from the 2011 report include:

- Higher temperatures in the Arctic and unusually lower temperatures in some low latitude regions are linked to global shifts in atmospheric wind patterns.
- A shift in the Arctic Ocean system since 2007 is indicated by a decline in sea ice thickness and summer extent, and a warmer and fresher upper ocean.
- Marine ecosystem observations suggest profound and continuing changes, such as a 20% increase in biological productivity at the base of the food chain since 1998.
- An increase of tundra vegetation in Eurasia and North America is linked to an increase in open water and warmer terrestrial temperatures in coastal regions.
- Continued loss of ice sheet and glacier mass, reduced snow extent and duration, and increasing temperatures of permafrost are linked to higher arctic air temperatures.



2011 Arctic Report Card

To read the 2011 Arctic Report Card, an executive summary, and previous Arctic Report Cards please go to:

<http://www.arctic.noaa.gov/reportcard/index.html>.

U.S. Arctic Research Commission Releases 2011-2012 Goals Report

The U.S. Arctic Research Commission (USARC) recently released the "USARC Report on the Goals and Objectives for Arctic Research 2011-2012." This biennial report recommends key goals and objectives to the President and to Congress. The report lists five broad priority research goals:

1. Observe, understand, and respond to environmental change in the Arctic, Arctic Ocean, and Bering Sea;
2. Improve arctic human health;
3. Assess natural resources;
4. Advance civil infrastructure research; and
5. Assess indigenous languages, identities, and cultural research needs.

The report cites examples of current and proposed research programs that address these goals, including: the [Sea Ice for Walrus Outlook project \(http://www.arcus.org/search/siwo\)](http://www.arcus.org/search/siwo), the Arctic Observing Network initiative, water and sanitation needs assessments in rural Alaska, research and modeling of gas hydrates in the Arctic, arctic marine shipping assessments, development of environmental response management tools, documentation of indigenous languages, and study of rural emigration to urban centers in Alaska. The report also highlights national and international communication and coordination efforts related to arctic research, and emerging topics in arctic research.



USARC Executive Director John Farrell (left) and Commission Chair Fran Ulmer meet with Alaska Congressman Don Young. Image courtesy: Office of Congressman Don Young.

Recommendations from this report are used by the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC) to develop the federal government's five-year Arctic Research Program Plan (See: [IARPC Developing Five-Year Plan \(http://www.arcus.org/witness-the-arctic/2012/1/article/6254\)](http://www.arcus.org/witness-the-arctic/2012/1/article/6254), this issue of *Witness*). The USARC report and the IARPC program plan are required by the [Arctic Research and Policy Act of 1984 \(http://www.nsf.gov/od/opp/arctic/iarpc/arc_res_pol_act.jsp\)](http://www.nsf.gov/od/opp/arctic/iarpc/arc_res_pol_act.jsp).

USARC's seven commissioners, appointed by the President, include four members from academic or research institutions, two members from private industry undertaking commercial activities in the Arctic, and one member from among the indigenous residents of the U.S. Arctic. The Director of the National Science Foundation serves as an ex officio eighth

member. Terms for three current members expire in late February 2012. The White House will likely appoint new commissioners in 2012. Ms. Fran Ulmer will continue to Chair USARC.

For further information, and to read the full USARC goals report, please go to: <http://www.arctic.gov> or contact John Farrell (jfarrell@arctic.gov).

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Arctic Forum Planned for May 2012

The Arctic Forum 2012 and the 24th ARCUS Annual Meeting will convene 1-2 May 2012 in Washington, D.C. The Arctic Forum will take place on Tuesday, 1 May at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. It is being held as part of a larger Science Policy Conference hosted by the American Geophysical Union (AGU), aimed at natural and social scientists and decision makers. The Forum will focus on science that helps inform stakeholders' decision-making processes. Assessing gaps and priority needs for arctic scientific information, the Forum will address three themes:

- Governance and Security in the Arctic,
- Energy Development in the Arctic, and
- Changing Arctic Ecosystems.

The Forum will examine the current state of decision-maker and public understanding of the issues. An important goal will be to foster an increased capacity for dialogue on arctic science policy issues.

Further information, including registration and the agenda, will be posted on the conference website: <http://sites.agu.org/spconference>.

The ARCUS Annual Meeting will take place on the morning of Wednesday, 2 May at the Pew Charitable Trusts Conference Center. The Annual Meeting serves to gather ARCUS member institution representatives, board members, and staff for an update on ARCUS programs and activities. The wider arctic community, agency personnel, and policymakers are invited to attend.

For questions on the Arctic Forum or the Annual Meeting, please contact ARCUS (info@arcus.org) or call 907-474-1600.