

The Arctic

The Arctic is extremely vulnerable to observed and projected climate change and its impacts. Historically, the harsh environment, difficult access to resources, and scattered populations has hindered rapid development and communication in the circumpolar region. In the past half-century, however, technological advances have increased the rate of development and climate change has become a major force shaping the future of the North.

While an increase in accessibility and marine activity will require greater support and pose increased environmental risks, it will also lead to opportunities of social and economic development through increased investment and infrastructure, and to improved access to goods, services and supplies.

PAME

The PAME (Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment) working group is one of the working groups of the Arctic Council and it addresses policy and non-emergency pollution prevention. The long term goal is to develop measures related to the protection of the Arctic marine environment from land and sea-based activities through coordinated action programmes and guidelines complementing existing legal arrangements. Further information on PAME and this assessment can be found at:



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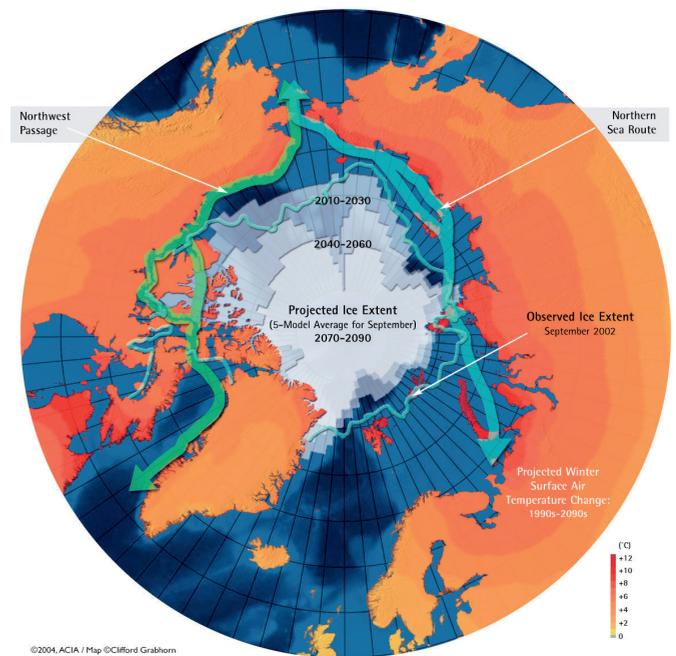
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Cover: ACIA, 2004, Clifford Grabhorn
Inside top left: Canadian Coast Guard
Inside bottom: Murmansk Shipping Company and Transport Canada
Inside right: Cover from the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan (2004)

Design and Printing: Prentstofan Stell ehf.

ARCTIC COUNCIL

ARCTIC MARINE SHIPPING ASSESSMENT 2005 - 2008



ACIA Key Finding #6:

“Reduced sea ice is very likely to increase marine transport and access to resources”

VISION

A healthy and productive Arctic Ocean and coasts that support environmental, economic and socio-cultural values for current and future generations.



Overview

The Arctic sea ice cover is undergoing an unprecedented transformation – sea ice thinning, a reduction in extent, and a reduction in the area of multi-year ice in the central Arctic Ocean. These changes are documented in the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, which also provides sea ice projections for the 21st century. These simulations show increasing ice-free areas in the Arctic coastal seas and suggest plausible increases in marine access throughout the Arctic Ocean.

Increased economic activity together with the current retreat of Arctic sea ice presents several plausible futures for the Arctic’s regional seas, the Northern Sea Route, the Northwest Passage, and the central Arctic Ocean. Continued sea ice reductions will likely lengthen the navigation season in all regions and increase marine access to the Arctic’s natural resources.’

These changes represent both a challenge and an opportunity for governments and local Arctic communities. Of key significance are the effects of expanded marine activities on the cultures and well-being of Arctic populations, especially indigenous residents whose traditional way of life has been partially protected in the past by the very nature of the remote and extreme Arctic environment in which they live.

The Scope

This assessment is a direct follow-up to the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan which was adopted by the Arctic Council Ministers at the 4th Arctic Council meeting in November 2004. PAME was requested to:

“conduct a comprehensive Arctic marine shipping assessment as outlined in the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan under the guidance of Canada, Finland, and the United States as lead countries and in collaboration with the EPPR (Emergency, Prevention, Preparedness and Response) working group and other working groups of the Arctic Council and Permanent Participants as relevant.”

Key Finding # 6 of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), also released in November 2004, is furthermore directly relevant to why the Arctic Council has called for this assessment:

“Reduced sea ice is very likely to increase marine transport and access to resources”

This assessment is circumpolar in focus and promotes cooperation and collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders and relevant organizations and recognizes the importance of contributions from the broader maritime community.



Work Plan

This assessment will span a three-year period (2005-2008) with the Final Report to be presented to the 6th Arctic Council Ministerial in Autumn 2008.

The work plan for this assessment consists of the following:

