ArcticData *(www.arcticdata.is)*

ACCESSIBILITY TO ARCTIC COUNCIL DATA

Background:

The CAFF and PAME Secretariats have been discussing the effectiveness and efficiency of the Working Groups within the Arctic Council as a result of recent assessments that have created extensive datasets e.g. the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment and the Oil & Gas Assessment. Information once collected and incorporated within Working Group assessments and reports have faced a number of challenges:

1. **It remains difficult to find** - while each Working Group has a website and archive these are independent of each other and there is no one site where data collected by Working Groups (not just contact details or activities) can be accessed in an organized and integrated manner.

2. **It is difficult to access** - while huge efforts go into collecting and amassing data for Working Groups projects it remains difficult to access in a format and manner which allows data to be easily useable and transferable. Data is tied into PDF reports and the hard data behind graphs, maps etc is not easily accessible, in particular those that are not protected by copyright.

Thus data from the Arctic Council remains under-used and the ability to allow the public, scientific community and the academia to access and benefit from this wealth of data is currently limited.

Concept:

If the Arctic Council can focus on considering how to access data collected by its Working Groups in an easy and accessible manner then this could constitute a significant contribution towards outreach and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Arctic Council.

A practical step towards achieving this would be to make Arctic Council data, which are to a large extent kept hidden in reports and documents, accessible in a central data repository where various data collected through Arctic Council projects would be accessible in a format and manner to allow them to be easily used.

Benefits/advantages:

Such a data repository holds many potential advantages and would contribute towards:

1. **Improving Arctic Council outreach**

   - By making the Arctic Council more visible through allowing data collected by the Working Groups to be easily accessible in a manner which allows for it to be easily used.

   - By providing a common access point for Arctic Council data which could offer a practical way to make Arctic Council datasets more accessible to the general public e.g. converting scientific knowledge into a more user friendly format. Intuitive web-based software would allow the public to more easily visualize complex information.

2. **Improving Arctic Council value to research and education**

   - Arctic Council datasets could be made available to the scientific community and academia in a more easily accessible manner via web mapping services and data downloads

   - Once data from differing Working Groups is used and accessible in tandem it would allow for the integration of diverse datasets and allow for the extraction of more information i.e. the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

- Different kinds of information could be used more effectively, allow for the development of new data products, and for a more cohesive observation of trends and patterns.

3. **Improving Arctic Council efficiency and effectiveness**

   - A central access point where diverse datasets/research can be viewed through a common interface offers the potential for achieving a more cohesive assessment of the current state of research.

   - It could help focus attention on areas where it is needed or where research conclusions, agree, disagree or require further exploration. This would offer potential for further comparative analysis and modeling between diverse datasets.

   - It would help reduce data redundancy and improve potential for data sharing. It could also help foster collaboration in developing framework data structures e.g. the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme and the SAON process.

   - It would provide a useful tool for decision and policy makers. It could offer the means to achieve a more cohesive overview of the nature, and potential of AC datasets e.g. data concerning marine sensitive areas contrasted with information on shipping lanes and oil & gas activities.

   - It offers the possibility through data integration to allow for regional planning, a service that could be of enormous benefit in helping to adapt and cope with the challenges presented by climate change. Cooperation and coordination between Working Groups could be enhanced through the integration of their data in a common interface, helping to highlight points of overlap and areas for cooperation

Proposal:

To consider how to remedy the above situation the CAFF and PAME Working Groups have focused on the issue of spatial information collected through two large Arctic Council assessments the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment and the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment. Both activities are/have collecting a wide array of data in a spatial format which should be made more accessible.

A web portal has been developed – www.arcticdata.is where spatial datasets with attached attribute data from CAFF and PAME are being made available to the public and research community to access and use as needed. The site is housed under the Arctic Portal.

This project has links and relevance for other projects such as the Arctic Spatial Data Infrastructure project and the Seabird Information Network.