

President Obama's Trip to Alaska and the Arctic: Context, Highlights, Initiatives

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Coverage of these remarks

- Context for the President's Visit
- Highlights and Initiatives from the Visit
- The Path Forward

Context for the Visit

- U.S. National Interests in the Arctic
- National Arctic Policy & Strategy
- Impacts & Opportunities from a Warming Arctic
- Federal Agency Roles in Alaska & the Arctic
- Interagency Coordination
- International Coordination

U.S. national interests in the Arctic

- national defense
- sovereign rights and responsibilities
- maritime safety
- energy and economic benefits
- environmental stewardship
- climate-change mitigation & adaptation
- scientific research
- indigenous peoples and their rights & cultures
- preservation of the rights, freedoms, and uses of the sea as reflected in international law

National Arctic policy and strategy

- Arctic Research & Policy Act (1984, amended 1990)
 - created U.S. Arctic Research Commission and Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC)
- NSPD-66 / HSPD-25: Arctic Region Policy (Jan 2009)
 - defines priorities re nat'l security, internat'l cooperation, sustainable resource management & economic development, conservation, indigenous peoples, scientific research
- Nat'l Strategy for the Arctic Region (May 2013) and Implementation Plan (Jan 2014)
 - priorities clustered under 3 lines of effort (nat'l & homeland security, stewardship, internat'l cooperation; subtasks elucidated; assignment of lead & supporting agencies
- National Strategy Implementation Report (Jan 2015)

Impacts & opportunities from warming

- Shrinking sea ice extent and thickness mean
 - expanded maritime navigation possibilities → economic benefits, jurisdictional issues, increasing ship traffic, pollution/accidents
 - expanded access to seabed resources → economic benefits, jurisdictional issues, increasing industrial activity, pollution/accidents
 - increased requirements for Coast Guard, Navy, & other oversight, management, & regulatory functions in the region
 - existential threats to ice-dependent creatures and the indigenous communities that utilize them
 - increased risks to coastal communities & infrastructure from sea-level rise and the loss of shoreline protection by sea ice
- Thawing permafrost threatens land transport, infrastructure
- Warming alters plant cover, vulnerability to wildfire, & other aspects of ecosystem dynamics

Agency Roles in Alaska and the Arctic

- STATE: interaction/diplomacy w other Arctic stakeholder nations
- DEFENSE: securing of coastal waters & national airspace against threats & intrusions
- DHS / COAST GUARD: safe & orderly navigation; search & rescue; border protection; marine spill response; fishing enforcement
- INTERIOR: energy-resource development & permitting; management of Federal lands; Alaska Native engagement
- ENERGY: rural energy; renewables development
- TRANSPORTATION: infrastructure for expanded maritime activity; support evolving aviation requirements
- COMMERCE: develop communications infrastructure
- USDA / FOREST SERVICE: agricultural extension; national forest management
- HHS: comprehensive health-care system for all 228 tribes in Alaska

Agency Roles (continued)

- NOAA: weather & climate monitoring & research; fisheries management; monitoring ocean/coastal/wetland health
- NASA: satellite observations/measurement including sea ice, snow cover, vegetation, wildfires
- NSF: funding & oversight for Arctic research
- EPA: water- & air-quality regulation; inland spill response
- Executive Office of the President
 - COS/DPC: energy & climate policy / initiatives
 - NSC: Arctic dimensions of national-security policy
 - OSTP/USGCRP: Arctic science & science policy
 - CEQ: conservation & resource-management policy
 - CEQ/OSTP: Arctic Ocean focus of the National Ocean Council
 - CEQ/OSTP/NSC/OMB: preparedness/resilience policy
 - OSTP/NSC: coordination of agency activities

Interagency Coordination

- **Arctic Research Commission**

- an independent Federal agency charged with recommending Arctic research policy to the President & Congress, establishing goals for Arctic research, and building cooperative links with State of Alaska and international partners;
- run by a Presidentially appointed advisory body (Fran Ulmer, Chair) supported by staffs in Washington DC and Anchorage

- **Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee**

- an interagency working group under the National Science & Technology Council (NSTC), charged with enhancing monitoring and research on local, regional, & global environmental issues in the Arctic through coordination among Federal agencies and domestic & international partners;
- chaired by Simon Stephenson, IARPC sits under NSTC's Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Sustainability (CENRS).

Interagency Coordination (continued)

- Arctic Executive Steering Committee
 - an interagency body created by Executive Order in January 2015 to help shape & reconcile priorities across all Federal agency roles in the Arctic, promote coordinated implementation & evaluation, improve coherence of engagement with the State of Alaska and Alaska Native Communities, and support the 2015-17 U.S. chairmanship of the 8-nation Arctic Council;
 - Chair is OSTP Director John Holdren; Vice Chair is Deputy Homeland Security Advisor Amy Pope;
 - members are Deputy Secretaries of all relevant Cabinet dep'ts; equivalents at NASA, NOAA, NSF, OMB, CEQ, OPE, IGA, ODNI; heads of Arctic Research Commission and IARPC;
 - has formed working groups on overlaps & gaps in agency roles; oil-spill preparedness; coastal erosion & flooding; use of high-resolution imagery / digital elevation maps; energy for remote communities; coordination with Alaska natives; support for GLACIER conference.

International Coordination

- Arctic Council

- established by Ottawa Declaration in 1996 to promote cooperation & coordination among the 8 nations with Arctic territory—with involvement of Arctic Indigenous communities—on sustainable development, environmental protection, research, shipping;
- principals are U.S. Secretary of State and his/her counterparts from the other 7 member nations;
- some other nations participate as observers;
- standing working groups focus on sustainable development, emergency prevention & response, protection of marine environment, conservation of Arctic flora & fauna, Contaminants Action Programme, and monitoring & assessment;
- chairmanship rotates among the 8 member nations for 2-year terms; Canada had chair 2013-2015 and was succeeded in May 2015 by the United States.

Highlights and Initiatives

- Objectives of the Visit
- President Obama's Meetings & Announcements
 - Anchorage
 - Seward,
 - Dillingham / Bristol Bay
 - Kotzebue
- Supporting Activities of Other Administration Officials
 - Secretary of State Kerry and Admiral Papp
 - Interior Secretary Jewell
 - NOAA Administrator Sullivan
 - CEQ Managing Director Goldfuss
 - OSTP Team

Objectives of the Visit

- Highlight consequences of climate change in Alaska and the Arctic
 - including impacts outside the Arctic of changes in the Arctic
- Demonstrate the Administration's attention to a balanced agenda for Alaska that includes...
 - resource development, economic opportunity, jobs;
 - reliable and affordable energy for all Alaskans;
 - environmental protection & conservation;
 - preserving indigenous people's culture & livelihoods; and
 - climate-change mitigation / preparedness / resilience
- Strengthen links w Alaskan leaders / stakeholders
- Educate the rest of America about Alaska's importance

President Obama in Alaska: Anchorage

EVENTS

- Aug 31: Roundtable with Alaska Native Leaders
 - focus on voting rights, salmon stocks, energy costs...
- Aug 31: Speech at GLACIER Conference
 - Conference chaired by Sec Kerry, attended by 21 nations, Alaska leaders, Administration officials;
 - POTUS focus on climate change, initiatives to deal with it.

INITIATIVES

- Officially restoring the Native Alaskan name Denali to North America's tallest mountain
- DOI funding for Inter-Tribal Fish Commissions
- DOI-led youth engagement program to promote Arctic way of life
- FWS-led program engaging native communities in conservation

President Obama Speaking at GLACIER Conference



Speaking on climate change at the GLACIER Conference. (Official White House Photo by Chuck Kennedy)

President Obama in Alaska: Seward

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

- Sep 1: Hike to Exit Glacier
 - focus on glacial retreat showing climate-change impacts...
- Sep 1: Coast Guard cutter cruise in Resurrection Bay
 - focus on changing maritime opportunities & challenges, marine wildlife

INITIATIVES

- Accelerate construction of at least 1 new icebreaker, work with Congress for more
- NOAA/USCG-led improved charting of Arctic waters
- 5-year project on Arctic marine biodiversity
- Addition of focus on community-based ecological monitoring to Arctic Council's March 16 Arctic Observing Summit

President Obama near Seward, visiting Exit and Bear Glaciers



*Collecting melt runoff from the ice of Exit Glacier.
(Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)*



*Seeing the effects of climate change on Bear Glacier.
(Official White House Photo by Chuck Kennedy)*



*Melt runoff from Exit Glacier in Kenai Fjords National Park.
About ten years ago, this spot would have still been part of the glacier.
(Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)*



*Shooting a GoPro video along the hike. (Official
White House Photo by Pete Souza)*

President Obama in Alaska: Bristol Bay

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

- Sep 2: Meeting with fishermen on Kakanak beach
 - focus on protection of salmon runs, importance of both commercial and subsistence fishing...
- Sep 2: Meeting with residents at N&N Market, Dillingham
 - focus on high cost of goods that must be shipped in, potential for economic development with increased local production
- Sep 2: Participation in cultural performance at D Middle School



President Obama in Alaska: Kotzebue

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

- Sep 2: Remarks at Kotzebue High School
 - focus on icebreakers, education/ConnectEd, native culture, energy
- Sep 2: Visit to Shore Avenue resilience project

INITIATIVES

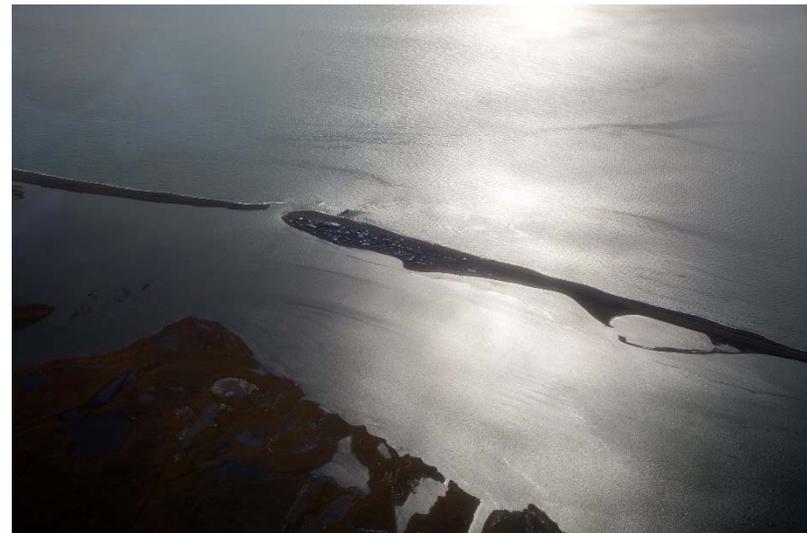
- Denali Commission to coordinate Federal/State/Tribal responses to coastal erosion, flooding, permafrost thaw, other resilience issues
- \$16M in USDA grants to improve rural Alaska water systems, plus new USDA rural development agreements with Native organizations
- DOE-led clean-energy & efficiency projects on Indian lands, plus USDA grants to offset high per-household energy costs
- NGA/NSF/USGS-led public-private partnerships for high-resolution maps and elevation models for Alaska and Arctic overall

President Obama in Kotzebue



Checking out John Baker's racing sled. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

The view from Air Force One of Kivalina Island, an Arctic town that's receding into the ocean as a result of rising sea levels. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)



Alaska calendar of other Federal officials

SEC KERRY: Aug 30 evening reception for GLACIER attendees, Alaskan officials, tribal leaders, NGOs; Aug 31 chairing of GLACIER Conference

ADM PAPP: In days ahead of GLACIER, briefing at new DHS Arctic Domain Awareness Center at U of Alaska Anchorage, remarks at US Alaska Command, roundtable with Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP) students & faculty

SEC JEWELL: Aug 31 address to Alaska Federation of Natives, participation with POTUS in Tribal Leaders Roundtable, address to Glacier Conference

NOAA ADMINISTRATOR SULLIVAN: Aug 29 visit to Begich-Boggs Visitor Center at Portage Glacier, meetings at Alaska Interagency Wildfire Coordinating Center, Aug 30 tour w Sen Dan Sullivan of Alaska Weather-Water-Ice Center, tour of Shell Oil Operations Center.

Other Federal officials (continued)

CEQ HEAD GOLDFUSS: Aug 30 visit to Portage Glacier, visit to burn site; Aug 31 panel on resilience at GLACIER Conference; Sep 1 roundtables on rural-energy solutions, community resilience

OSTP TEAM (Director Holdren, E&E Division Head Dickinson, AESC Exec Director Brzezinski, NOC Exec Director Kerttula)

- Aug 29, Fairbanks: meetings at Cold Climate Housing Research Center, U of Alaska Fairbanks climate researchers
- Aug 30–Sep 1, Anchorage: meetings with Arctic Fulbright Fellows, ANSEP students & faculty, Alaska mayors; Holdren address to GLACIER Conference on climate change in the Arctic and its impacts there & elsewhere; roundtable w Alaska Gov Walker, Lt Gov Mallott, and Alaska public/private/NGO energy leaders on rural energy solutions
- Sep 1-2, Juneau: meetings w local leaders & stakeholders, Marine Exchange of Alaska, Marine Research Institute



The Path Forward

- Arctic Executive Steering Committee to move out aggressively to ensure coordinated implementation of all initiatives announced on the Alaska trip
- OMB, OSTP, AESC will work with agencies to ensure their FY17 Budget requests reflect funding for the initiatives where needed
- AESC will coordinate closely with Arctic Research Commission & IARPC on follow-up to research components of the new initiatives
- AESC will work with Sec Kerry, Adm Papp, Fran Ulmer on advancing international collaborative aspects through the Arctic Council (one big focus will be data sharing)



<http://www.ostp.gov>