U.S. Arctic Policy and Coordination

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Arctic Boundary as defined by the Arctic Research and Policy Act (ARPA)

All United States and foreign territory north of the Arctic Circle and all United States territory north and west of the boundary formed by the Porcupine, Yukon, and Kuskokwim Rivers; all contiguous seas, including the Arctic Ocean and the Beaufort, Bering and Chukchi Seas; and the Aleutian chain.¹

Credit: US Arctic Research Commission
U.S. national interests in the Arctic

• national defense;
• sovereign rights and responsibilities;
• maritime safety;
• energy and economic benefits;
• environmental stewardship;
• scientific research;
• indigenous peoples and their rights & cultures;
• preservation of the rights, freedoms, and uses of the sea as reflected in international law.
Change in the Arctic: rapid warming
Challenges & opportunities of warming

• Shrinking sea ice extent and thickness mean
  o expanded maritime navigation possibilities ➔ economic benefits, jurisdictional issues, increasing ship traffic, pollution/accidents
  o expanded access to seabed resources ➔ economic benefits, jurisdictional issues, increasing industrial activity, pollution/accidents
  o increased requirements for Coast Guard, Navy, & other oversight, management, & regulatory functions in the region
  o existential threats to ice-dependent creatures and the indigenous communities that utilize them
  o 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
The shrinking Arctic sea ice

The magenta line is the average sea-ice extent at its September minimum from 1979 to 2000. The 2012 extent was by far the lowest since 1979, when satellite observations began.

National Ice and Snow Data Center
Summer Arctic sea-ice history & future

Future Projections of September Arctic Sea Ice Extent Under Various Emissions Scenarios

- RCP 2.6 (11)
- RCP 4.5 (16)
- RCP 6.0 (8)
- RCP 8.5 (14)
- Historical (16)
- Observed
Arctic policy & coordination chronology


• (8-nation) Arctic Council (1996)

• NSPD-66 / HSPD-25: Arctic Region Policy (Jan 2009)

• National Ocean Council (July 2010)

• Arctic Search & Rescue Agreement (Jan 2013)

• Interagency Report on Arctic Management (Mar 2013)

• Nat’l Strategy for the Arctic Region (May 2013)

• Nat’l Strategy Implementation Plan (Jan 2014)

• Nat’l Strategy Implementation Report (Jan 2015)

• EO on Enhancing Coordination of National Efforts in the Arctic (Jan 2015)
Aims of the 2009 Arctic Policy

• Meeting U.S. national security needs.

• Protecting the Arctic environment and conserving its living resources.

• Ensuring environmentally-sustainable natural resource management and economic development in the region.

• Strengthening institutions for cooperation among the eight Arctic nations (the United States, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, and Sweden).

• Involving the Arctic’s indigenous communities in decisions that affect them.

• Enhancing scientific monitoring and research on local, regional, and global environmental issues.
Priority Lines of Effort in the 2013 Strategy

- Protect U.S. national and homeland security interests
- Promote responsible stewardship
- Foster international cooperation
Recent USG reports on Arctic strategy, management, and research.
Interrelationships among U.S. interagency Arctic activities

**Security & International**
- Interagency Policy Committee
- National Security Staff; Arctic Policy Group
- Department of State
- U.S. Extended Continental Shelf Task Force
- National Ocean Council/
- Department of Defense
- Task Force on Climate Change

**Energy Development & Transportation**
- Interagency Working Group on Coordination of Domestic Energy Development and Permitting in AK
- Committee on Marine Transportation

**Science & Stewardship**
- National Ocean Council,
- Arctic Research Commission
- Interagency Arctic Research Policy Commission
- Alaska Marine Ecosystem Forum
- North Slope Science Initiative,
- Alaska Climate Change Round Table
A Visualization of Federal Arctic Research Coordination
Who’s talking to Whom?

KEY:
- Ellipse size proportional to # participants
- Line weight proportional to # of shared teams, coded:
  - 1-4
  - 5-8
  - 9+
Executive Order: Enhancing Coordination of National efforts in the Arctic
January 21, 2015

The White House
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

EXECUTIVE ORDER

ENHANCING COORDINATION OF NATIONAL EFFORTS IN THE ARCTIC

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and to prepare the Nation for a changing Arctic and enhance coordination of national efforts in the Arctic, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Policy. The Arctic has critical long-term strategic, ecological, cultural, and economic value, and it is imperative that we continue to protect our national interests in the region, which include: national defense; sovereign rights and responsibilities; maritime safety; energy and economic benefits; environmental stewardship; promotion of science and research; and preservation of the rights, freedoms, and uses of the sea as reflected in international law.
What can AESC accomplish?

- Help shape & reconcile priorities
- Promote coordinated implementation & evaluation
- Improve coherence of engagement with the State of Alaska and Alaska Native communities
- Support U.S. Chairmanship of the Arctic Council
US Chairmanship of the Arctic Council 2015-2017

Working Groups of the Arctic Council

Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme

Conservation of the Arctic Flora and Fauna

Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response

Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment

Arctic Economic Council

Sustainable Development Working Group