



Arctic

Global Arctic Programme

A global response to a global challenge



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Researchers studied supraglacial lakes on an expedition to Greenland's ice sheet, with support from WWF.

Who we are

Our vision is that effective international stewardship shields the Arctic from the worst effects of rapid change by promoting healthy living systems to the benefit of local peoples and all humanity. We are the coordinators of a focused international effort by WWF to achieve that vision. WWF operates in more than 40 countries, and has a staff of more than 5,400.

We have operated a programme focused on the circumpolar world since 1992. We have an office in every Arctic country except Iceland. Our international office, headquartered in Canada (with an office in Oslo) coordinates our Arctic work. WWF is the only circumpolar environmental NGO present at the Arctic Council, where we hold observer status. This regional body gives us access to policy discussions between Arctic states, Indigenous peoples, and other observers.



GLOBAL FOCUS

THE GLOBAL ARCTIC PROGRAMME WORKS AROUND THE POLE, WITH OFFICES IN 7 ARCTIC COUNTRIES.

Why we care

Because of its low population density, the Arctic has been a place relatively untouched by industrial development. That is now changing. The Arctic is considered by the US Geological Survey to contain almost 20 percent of the world's remaining undiscovered oil and gas. Diamonds are mined there, and gold, and many other minerals. The Arctic summer sea ice is predicted to be gone within a generation. Without that protective shell of ice, the Arctic is exposed to new influences. Shipping companies are already building vessels to operate in the region, and there is much discussion about the potential of using Arctic routes to shave time and distance off international shipping. The whole marine ecosystem is in flux with changing temperatures in the Arctic, which could mean commercial fishing further north.

The Arctic is warming at about twice the rate of the global average. This is creating tremen-

dous challenges for species, ecosystems, and peoples who have evolved to take advantage of the Arctic's unique conditions. Ice-adapted animals are most at risk: polar bears, some species of seal, walrus, and some whale species. Less obvious, but just as affected, are a whole host of smaller organisms that feed the Arctic food web. Even on land, the effects of warming are being felt. Several wild caribou herds are shrinking, a decline blamed partly on changing weather conditions. Reindeer herders across Eurasia also report problems brought on by warming.

While many impacts of warming are being felt in the Arctic, a warming Arctic also has global impacts. The loss of reflective snow and ice in the Arctic means the whole world gets warmer, and gases such as methane currently frozen into permafrost also have the potential to further increase global temperatures.

WWF PROJECTS IN THE ARCTIC

From past to present: The twenty years of the Arctic Programme, and the work by WWF offices before the programme existed have built a solid base for WWF's Arctic work. This map provides a sampling of the reach and diversity of WWF's current Arctic projects.



PROTECTED AREAS

7. WWF continues its work with local people and governments to create protected terrestrial and marine areas.

13. WWF has been working with a coalition to bring permanent protection from industrial development to Bristol Bay. This area is referred to as America's "fishbasket" because of the value of the fisheries there.

21. WWF has helped establish many protected areas in Russia, including the "polar bear park" on Novaya Zemlya, Beringiya and Onezhskoe Pomor'e national parks, and a buffer zone around Wrangel Island Reserve.

24. WWF is working on the creation of protected areas around Khibiny, Rybachiy peninsula and Kolguev island, as well as several marine buffer zones around reserves in the Russian Arctic.



CONSERVATION

2. Reducing polar bear/human conflict: WWF has helped supply polar-bear proof fences and food bins to keep them away from conflict with local people.

9. WWF has developed a species plan for Arctic whales: bowhead, narwhal, and beluga are designated as priority species by our Arctic Programme.

11. The Umky Patrol (polar bear patrol) —WWF supports Chukchi villages in their efforts to use non-lethal methods of keeping polar bears at a safe distance. The patrols have also been protecting walrus that have been showing up on shore in record numbers.

12. WWF addresses the protection of polar bears at the international, national and local levels. Internationally, we facilitate cross-border information exchanges in support of the U.S.- Russia Agreement on the Conservation and Management of the Alaska-Chukotka Polar Bear Population.

15. Recognizing, demonstrating and capturing the value of ecosystem services and improving management in protected areas are priorities for WWF in Kamchatka.

18. WWF is developing an Arctic-wide conservation plan for wild reindeer and caribou.

25. WWF is working with Saami to explore ways of reducing future cumulative impacts of different pressures (eg. mining, wind power, forestry, tourism and large carnivores) on reindeer herding in Sweden.

29. WWF is developing a conservation plan for atlantic walrus in the Barents, White and Kara Seas.



SUSTAINABLE USE

6. The WWF office in Inuvik is taking part in a ground-breaking marine spatial planning exercise, along with local people and government.



RESEARCH

1. WWF supports research on polar bears in southern Hudson Bay—this population is showing signs of stress as climate change eats away at the summer sea ice the bears need.

17. WWF has engaged international experts to advise on how the Arctic Ocean might be better regulated.

20. WWF is supporting Norwegian scientists on Svalbard who are researching the local polar bear population.

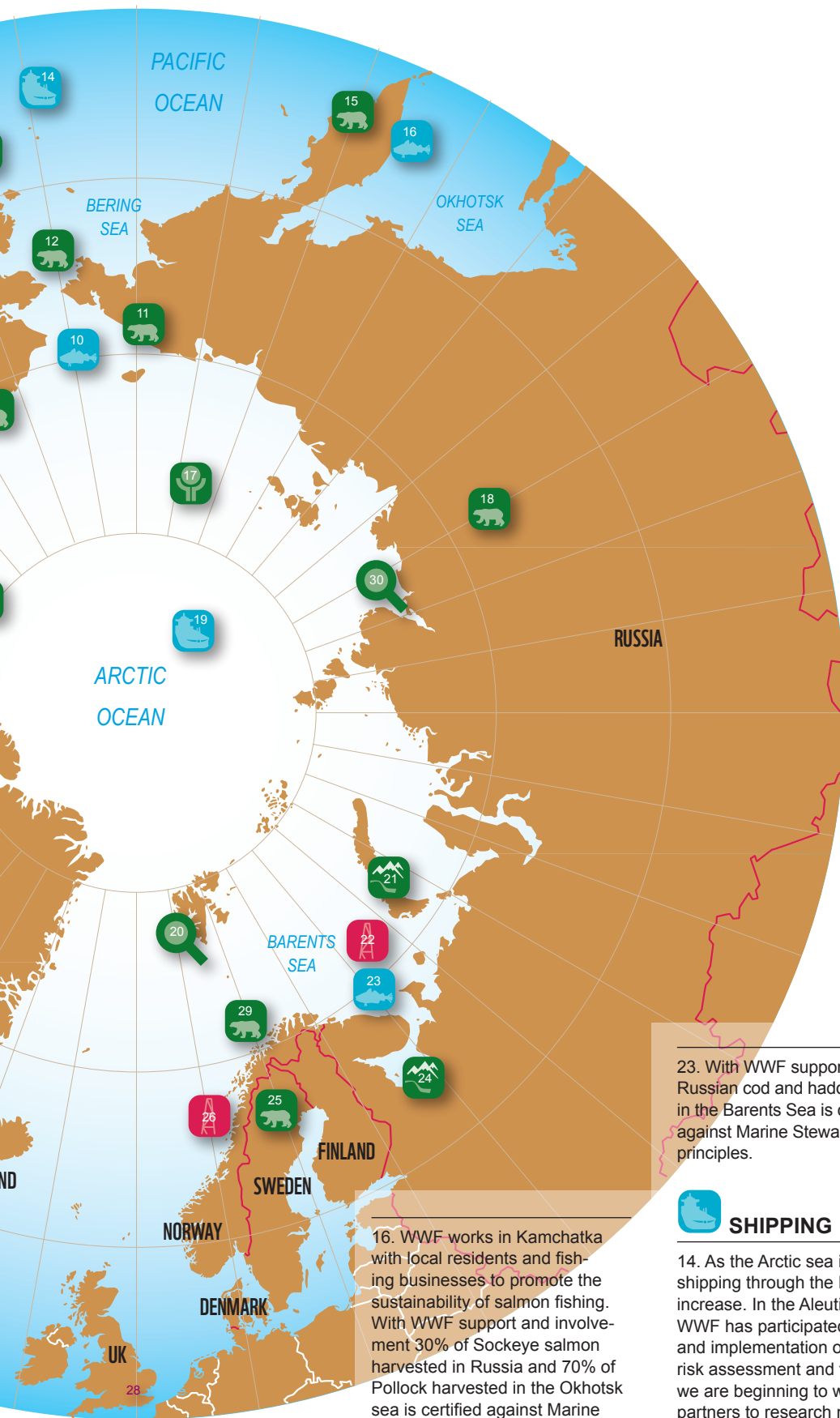
30. WWF organised an expedition to the Laptev Sea to determine whether the walrus population there is a unique subspecies.

FISHERIES

4. WWF is advising Greenland on sustainability of its fisheries.

10. WWF advocates for improved fishing practices in the Bering and Okhotsk Seas, such as the reduction of bycatch and discards in the Pollock fishery and the use of streamer lines in the Russian long line fishery to reduce seabird bycatch.





16. WWF works in Kamchatka with local residents and fishing businesses to promote the sustainability of salmon fishing. With WWF support and involvement 30% of Sockeye salmon harvested in Russia and 70% of Pollock harvested in the Okhotsk sea is certified against Marine Stewardship Council principles. We are also advocating for an end to large scale drift-net fishing in the Russian EEZ and the resulting wasteful bycatch, and fighting illegal fishing.

23. With WWF support, 70% of the Russian cod and haddock trade in the Barents Sea is certified against Marine Stewardship Council principles.

 **SHIPPING**

14. As the Arctic sea ice diminishes, shipping through the Bering Sea will increase. In the Aleutian Islands, WWF has participated in the design and implementation of a shipping risk assessment and further north, we are beginning to work with local partners to research measures to protect marine resources from the threat of shipwrecks and related oil spills, invasive species, ship strikes, and pollution.

19. WWF is making representations to the International Maritime Organization to ensure a stringent set of rules to govern the increasing Arctic shipping.

 **OIL**

8. WWF played an effective role in helping to shape the revision of offshore oil drilling regulations in the Canadian Arctic.

22. WWF's Barents Sea office tackles a variety of issues in the Barents and Kara Seas, including opposing oil drilling plans in places where there is not enough information on the impacts of a spill.

26. WWF is working in Norway to make areas such as Lofoten permanently off limits to oil drilling, because of the natural values of the region, and the economic value of the local fishery.

 **CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENCE**

3. WWF is working around the Arctic on a project to define what areas are best placed to cope with the coming level of climate change.

5. WWF supports scientific work to investigate the effects of climate change in the Arctic.

GOVERNANCE

27. Canada chairs the Arctic Council from 2014-2016. WWF is an official observer at the council, and contributes to the council's work in promoting sustainability, conducting research, and in providing direction to minimize environmental damage from human activities.

28. WWF also works outside the Arctic on Arctic issues: we were part of a group that presented the British government with ideas for a set of principles that could govern the work of the UK government, and UK companies in the Arctic.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

The enormous challenges of the changing Arctic require a broad array of responses from the local to the global. WWF is active at all of these levels.

ARCTIC SPECIES

We have identified four priorities for our species work: caribou/reindeer; polar bears; walruses; and ice-adapted whales such as narwhal and bowhead. We have chosen those species because of their importance to ecosystems and people, and because of the level of threat they face. WWF is working to protect critical habitat including important movement corridors and denning places, and to prevent or mitigate direct threats from industrial activity such as oil and gas development and shipping. In the case of polar bears, we are also providing people with training and tools to help prevent conflict between bears and people.



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ARCTIC GOVERNANCE

This is the more global aspect of our work—no matter how good regulations or management systems may be in any one Arctic jurisdiction or sector, that good work can be undone by a neighbouring jurisdiction or another sector. WWF has commissioned reports showing where the gaps in governance are, and suggesting ways to fix those gaps. We continue to work with Arctic states and Indigenous peoples and advocate for improved Arctic governance, within the Arctic Council and elsewhere.

CLIMATE RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATION


The big picture is clear: the Arctic is warming, and fast. The smaller picture is harder to understand. What processes are driving the changes, and what effect will they have at a regional or community level? WWF is supporting research into both of these areas, both by our expert staff, and by other acknowledged international experts in the field. By communicating this improved knowledge to local and global audiences, we help local people make decisions about how to manage changing ecosystems, and we supply global decision-makers with information they need to consider in international climate negotiations.

RESPONSIBLE INDUSTRY

We know the Arctic cannot be a nature theme-park. The people who live there need economic opportunities. We work with local people, and with developers from outside the region to try to ensure that development can take place at a pace and on a scale that is supportable by the fragile and changing Arctic ecosystems. This work includes mapping which natural areas are the most important to ecosystems. This information can help industries work around those areas, for example by choosing different shipping routes, or helping make the case for areas too naturally valuable to be threatened by industrial accidents.

CONSERVATION BLUEPRINT

As the Arctic changes, valued areas change too. The old established parks may no longer be havens for species they were designed to protect, and so the approach to conservation needs to adapt. WWF is leading international research and working with local people to identify areas that are most valuable in an ecological and social sense, then to establish the vulnerability of those areas to anticipated climate change. The final product will be a circumpolar map together with recommendations that can be used by local peoples and Arctic states to help plan and manage areas so that they can best withstand climate change.

	<p>Why we are here To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.</p> <hr/> <p>panda.org/arctic</p>
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