



# U.S. Chairmanship of the Arctic Council

## Midterm Update

The United States has entered the second year of its Arctic Council Chairmanship under the theme: *One Arctic: Shared Opportunities, Challenges and Responsibilities*. The Council's 2015-2017 workplan contains a slew of initiatives aimed at promoting Arctic Ocean safety, security, and stewardship, improving economic and living conditions throughout the Arctic and addressing the impacts of climate change. Under the U.S. Chairmanship, the Arctic Council is also taking concrete steps to continue strengthening itself as an intergovernmental forum, prioritizing long-term initiatives, and raising public awareness of the Arctic. The following list highlights some of the midterm accomplishments and on-going work of the Arctic Council under the leadership of the U.S. Chairmanship. Additional information on the initiatives outlined below can be found on the [Arctic Council's website](#) and in the [U.S. Chairmanship Project Primer](#).

### **Accomplishments**

- The Arctic Council released groundbreaking procedures for the safe operation of [unmanned aircraft systems](#) in the Arctic, the first international guidelines that include protocols for the use of these aircraft across an entire geographic region.
- A “LEO reporter” app has been deployed as part of the [Circumpolar Local Environmental Observer Network](#)'s efforts to expand indigenous and remote communities' reporting of weather and environmental anomalies.
- The Arctic Council expanded its [Observer Manual for Subsidiary Bodies](#) to further detail intersessional communication, meeting participation, and project contributions for stronger observer engagement.
- More than 450 participants from 14 countries responded to a survey on [One Health](#) in the Arctic, providing valuable input into the Arctic Council's work. “One Health” - a joint approach to human, animal, and environmental health – is particularly relevant to the Arctic given rapid climate change and the prevalence of subsistence lifestyles. The Arctic Council's survey is thought to be the largest survey of One Health awareness and practices ever conducted at a regional level.
- The Arctic Council has advanced [emergency preparedness](#) by exercising the [Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic](#) and the [Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution, Preparedness and Response in the Arctic](#).

## ***Looking Ahead***

- The Arctic Council expects to have a legally-binding agreement to [enhance scientific cooperation in the Arctic](#) ready for signature by Ministers at the Fairbanks Ministerial in 2017.
- Through the implementation of the [Framework for Action on Black Carbon and Methane](#), the Arctic Council is developing a synthesis report of black carbon and methane emissions from both Arctic and non-Arctic states.
- The [Arctic Remote Energy Networks Academy](#) is increasing capacity, promoting leadership, and deploying traditional and local knowledge in the operation and management of remote networks (microgrids) combined with renewable resources.
- A [circumpolar telecommunications assessment](#) is underway to identify the infrastructure necessary to address the growing communication needs of Arctic residents and to support safe navigation, offshore development activities, search and rescue operations, and environmental and humanitarian emergencies.
- Cross-cutting initiatives are addressing community and ecosystem resilience, including efforts to understand and evaluate adaptation and resilience strategies through the [Arctic Resilience Assessment](#), in close coordination with the [Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic Part-C](#). The Arctic Council is also coordinating a circumpolar plan to prevent and manage [invasive species](#), promoting [One Health](#), and developing a new [Arctic Resilience Framework](#) to establish shared priorities for building resilience as well as identify gaps and ways forward.
- The Arctic Council is [advancing oil spill response preparedness](#) by developing a database of Arctic response assets and updating a field guide on oil spill response in Arctic waters.
- Looking ahead to the future of the Arctic Ocean, the [Arctic Council](#) is assessing the needs for international coordination to meet the future challenges and opportunities of Arctic marine cooperation.
- Progress also continues on a broad range of initiatives such as improving methods of evaluating the effectiveness of [suicide interventions](#); promoting Arctic best practices and new technologies for [sewage management and local water delivery](#); producing high-resolution [digital elevation models of the Arctic](#); developing a pan-Arctic network of existing [marine protected areas](#); implementing targeted, on-the-ground demonstration projects for reducing [diesel black carbon emissions](#); expanding the [Arctic reach](#) of the [Global Ocean Acidification Observing Network](#); and more.

## ***Raising Public Awareness***

- The [Fulbright Arctic Initiative](#) is supporting 17 scholars from the eight Arctic States who are researching the impact of change in the Arctic and engaging in collaborative thinking, analysis, and innovative problem solving around the issues of water, infrastructure, energy, and health.
- The year-long “[Our Arctic Nation](#)” blog is exploring how each U.S. state contributes to America’s identity as an Arctic nation. Each week, an entry highlights the Arctic connections - cultural, environmental, economic, or other - of a different U.S. state, authored by an individual or organization with ties to both the featured state and the Arctic.
- The U.S. [Arctic Youth Ambassador \(AYA\) Program](#), created by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Alaska Region) and the State Department in partnership with Alaska Geographic, is bringing together 22 young Alaskans between the ages of 17-21 to amplify the youth perspective on the Arctic and strengthen connections among regional youth. The AYAs participate in media interviews, public speaking events, social media activities, and engagements with local, national, and international leaders.

Inquiries on specific initiatives should be addressed to the relevant Arctic Council subsidiary body:

### **Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP):**

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### **Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP)**

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### **Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF)**

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### **Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR)**

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### **Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME)**

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### **Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG)**

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### **Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation (TFAMC)**

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**Task Force on Telecommunications Infrastructure in the Arctic (TFTIA)**

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**Scientific Cooperation Task Force (SCTF)**

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**Black Carbon and Methane Expert Group (BCMEG)**

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