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CREATING A NEW FUTURE FOR THE ARCTIC

2007 HIGHLIGHTS



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WWF International Arctic Programme

director's message



Dr Neil Hamilton

Dear colleagues,

2007 was a year of unprecedented change in the Arctic. No other place on the planet experienced as much physical transformation as a result of global warming. Summer sea ice levels hit a record low in September – a milestone with serious implications for the future of arctic wildlife and indigenous people.

Making a real difference is at the heart of WWF's global agenda. The Arctic is among the priority regions where WWF is focusing its worldwide resources to deliver transformational change – combining field work, policy advocacy and corporate partnerships.

WWF believes that the choices we make today will shape the Arctic for generations to come. *Creating a new future for the Arctic* is the purpose of the WWF Arctic Network Initiative – a new international partnership launched in 2007 that taps the enormous resources of the WWF network together with business and industry, scientific and research institutions, and government agencies.

It is not too late to prevent an arctic meltdown, but the window of opportunity is closing fast. Looking to the future, WWF will focus its efforts in the Arctic on reducing humanity's footprint in one of the Earth's last unspoiled regions and protecting fragile arctic biodiversity. Climate change is at the top of our agenda for 2008.

The highlights of our work in 2007 presented in this brochure represent the hard work and efforts of our partners. Thank you to everyone who has made possible WWF's accomplishments in the Arctic. We look forward to continuing our cooperation and to expanding our network of partners in our mission to create a new future for the Arctic.

partners

The Norwegian Barents Secretariat
Norwegian Polar Institute/Norsk Polarinstitutt
Norwegian Coastal Authority/Kystverket, Norway
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Norwegian Ministry of the Environment
Greenpeace, Norway
Bellona, Norway
Aker Seafoods
Ben & Jerry's
Banrock Station wines
Canon
Spitsbergen Travel
Oceanwide Expeditions
Profil Reyser
The Lennox Foundation
The Weston Foundation
The 1001: A Nature Trust
TF1 (French television)
Readers of *Bild* magazine
Google Earth
The U.S. Geological Survey
The University of Alberta, Canada
Kandalaksha Zapovednik, Russia
Bioforsk Svanhovd, Norway
Nenets Information Analytical Center (NIAC)
Yasavey, Nenets
Abisko Research Station, Sweden
Murmansk Marine Biological Institute (MMBI), Russia
Gaia / Northern Coalition, Murmansk, Russia
Teachers Training College, Murmansk, Russia
Murmansk and Nenets District Protected Areas
Directorates, Russia



WWF International and the following WWF national offices have contributed to the Arctic Programme: Netherlands, Norway, UK, Canada, US, Russia, Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, and Finland.

oil & gas

Development of petroleum resources in the Arctic shall be limited and strictly regulated to reduce negative impacts on biodiversity, marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

In 2007, WWF led several initiatives to reduce the negative environmental impact of fossil fuel development in the Arctic. The focus on oil spill response training for Norwegian and Russian volunteers provided a practical way for developing emergency response capacity.

For the first time in Russia, an oil spill response training project involving volunteers and combat troops took place in close coordination between WWF and Russian authorities. The following activities during 2007 contributed to building strong cross-border volunteer relationships that are vital should there be an accident requiring an emergency response:

- Forty-two volunteers participated in an oil spill response simulation on the banks of the Kola Bay in September 2007. Russian volunteers joined Norwegians from the Nordnorskberedskapssenter. Professional cleaners demonstrated water surface clean-up, then the volunteers practiced removing oil from stones, sand and birds.
- WWF completed a successful oil spill training exercise on Svalbard in June 2007 including four instructors, 14 participants from local tour operators, local government, and the university.
- A group of 33 students trained for volunteer oil spill combat in March 2007 and two training sessions were held during April and May with 13 students participating.

Russian authorities highly appreciated WWF efforts and are preparing to launch their own project as a result of the training initiative. WWF-trained volunteers from the Barents Sea region traveled to the Black Sea in November to assist in cleanup operations following a major accident in the Kerch Strait.

In October, WWF staff participated in a marine ecology conference in Vladivostok, Russia where the discussion explored how the Norwegian Integrated Management Plan for the Barents Sea could be a model for developing new policies in the Russian Far East. Participants also discussed WWF's advocacy work to create petroleum-free zones in priority areas in the Barents to limit the impact of oil and gas development on vulnerable species and to conserve biodiversity.



Joint Norwegian-Russian oil spill training in Mishukovo settlement, Kola Bay, September 2007. Photo: WWF-Russia.

protected areas

CONSERVATION WINS IN THE BARENTS SEA



The following achievements during 2007 resulted from the hard work and lobbying efforts of the WWF Barents Sea Ecoregion team:

- The Nenets autonomous regional administration in northwestern Russia created a state nature reserve on Vaigach Island with an area of 243,000 hectares;
- WWF supported reconstruction of the field biological station in the Kandalaksha Reserve, improving facilities that are regularly used by youth and students who assist with research and monitoring;
- Agreement reached with Russian authorities on inspection and assessment of existing regional and federal nature protected areas in the Barents Sea to include NGO participation.

sustainable fisheries

Fish stocks in the Arctic will be managed in a way that supports the long-term maintenance of the ecosystem and reduces pressure on arctic fish stocks from climate change.



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ALASKA FISHERIES & CLIMATE CHANGE

The Bering Sea makes up one of the most diverse and rich sub-polar and polar marine ecosystems in the world. Not surprisingly, the tremendous richness of this ecoregion draws fishermen from all over the world. In recent years, coastal residents, fishermen, and biologists have documented declines not only in fish, but also in seabirds and marine mammals. Mounting scientific evidence indicates that climate change is a growing threat to the Bering Sea ecosystem.

The Arctic Programme and the WWF-US Bering Sea Ecoregion Programme identified fisheries in the Bering Sea as a priority with regard to resilience to climate change. WWF commissioned the Alaska Marine Conservation Council to do a scoping study suggesting different elements for a project on resilience of the Bering Sea marine ecosystem. Plans for 2008 include a follow-up to the scoping study.

WWF has worked systematically at the international, regional and national levels to ensure that fishing quotas are more sustainable. As a result of WWF's long-term, international communication and campaigning efforts, pressure on cod stock was eased with a 20,000-ton quota reduction in 2007. Russia and Norway also agreed on a joint inspections program for 2007, and Russia increased the capacity of its border guard fleet to enhance high seas control over the fisheries.

In October, WWF hosted a successful seminar on traceability in Murmansk. The event engaged the Russian fishing industry and policymakers in a conversation about how environmental certification can help reduce pressure on fish stocks and increase long-term economic security for fishermen. WWF partners in the seminar included the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and the European Union Association of Fish Processors (AIPCE).

WWF developed a report explaining the scope of illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing in the Arctic. Using the Barents Sea cod and Bering Sea pollock fisheries as examples, the report offers recommendations to policymakers, fisheries management organisations, the seafood industry, retailers and consumers. It will be released in April 2008 and available at: www.panda.org/arctic.

The Norwegian Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs awarded WWF-Norway with the "Lighthouse Prize," in recognition of "indefatigable and thorough involvement in the fight against illegal fishing."



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climate change

WWF will engage with partners to design, promote and implement climate change adaptation strategies for the Arctic that will reduce vulnerability of the marine ecosystem to the impacts of a warming planet.

Climate change is transforming the arctic ecosystem, creating feedback effects that bring more disturbance and pollution to the north. Protecting the Arctic from the dramatic consequences of global warming requires radical and immediate reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to help arctic nature and society adapt to climate change. WWF is working with its partners on several fronts to keep the Arctic cool.

The second class graduated from the Ben & Jerry's Climate Change College in 2007. These "Climate Change Ambassadors" planned and implemented creative campaigns to promote awareness and action to reducing emissions. WWF provided key information on arctic climate change, as well as insight and advice on "the big picture" of climate change. The six ambassadors from four countries were able to get first hand information from recognised arctic scientists, discussions with local people, and their own observations while further developing their campaigns. The experiences from this trip made a lasting and valuable contribution to the young people's campaigns for more energy efficiency and alternative energy use. For more information, visit: www.climatechangecollege.org

CLIMATE WITNESS

**Hudson Sam, Elder
Huslia, Alaska**



© WWF / Tonje Folkestad

**It was a lot colder
when I was young,
months at a time.**

This weather nowadays is unpredictable; it just comes and goes anytime it wants to go. Even trapping is unpredictable now.

For more information about WWF's Climate Witness initiative:
www.panda.org/climatewitness



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As part of WWF's Climate Savers program to encourage corporations to reduce carbon emissions, Svalbard's largest tour operator, Spitsbergen Travel, entered into an agreement with WWF to reduce its overall emissions and offset remaining emissions with Gold Standard-certified carbon credits by 2010. Educating employees and customers about climate change is also an integral part of the agreement. Spitsbergen Travel is the first Norwegian Climate Savers partner. Rasmus Hansson, CEO of WWF Norway, challenged Spitsbergen Travel's parent company Hurtigruten as well as other Norwegian businesses to follow the lead by committing to ambitious emissions reductions in their own operations.

In addition to communicating the urgency and implications of arctic climate change to the world, WWF is working to build resilience in the arctic ecosystem in order to minimize the negative impacts from climate change. Researchers under the lead of Dr Terry Callaghan from the Abisko Scientific Research Station in Sweden have designed a methodology for a quantitative assessment of ecosystem vulnerability; WWF will further develop the methodology for implementation in 2008.

polar bear conservation

Rapidly diminishing sea ice coverage across the Arctic as a result of global warming is reducing the habitat range of polar bears. Hunting and mating areas vital to the bears' survival are literally melting away. In September 2007, the summer sea ice in the Arctic Ocean was in its worst shape since surveillance started in the 1970s: both extent and thickness had reduced dramatically.

Arctic nations took measures to strengthen international legal protection for polar bears in 2007. The U.S. and Russia ratified a bilateral agreement for the long-term conservation of shared polar bear populations in Alaska and Chukotka. WWF also worked tirelessly to make sure political pressures would not override the clear scientific evidence for a successful listing of the polar bear under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

WWF-Canon POLAR BEAR TRACKER

The **WWF-Canon Polar Bear Tracker** is a website that encompasses science, environmental education and advocacy. In January 2007, Canon Europe became a major WWF sponsor to create an interactive educational website on polar bears and arctic conservation that provides a fun learning opportunity for children aged 7 to 11. Canon's sponsorship helped WWF to increase its support to the Norwegian Polar Institute, upgrade the website with an interactive map and follow the movements of four bears. The website includes a map on Google Earth that allows users to follow the bears' movements across their arctic habitat. Scientists' blogs on the website provide analysis including how the bears may be affected by climate change. Through cooperation with the University of Alberta, Canada, and the U.S. Geological Survey, Alaska, visitors to the WWF-Canon Polar Bear Tracker website can now also follow polar bear movements in Alaska's Beaufort Sea and the Canadian Hudson Bay.



Polar Bear Patrol members use the traditional Chukchi method to warn off bears. Photo: © Tom Arnbom

WWF POLAR BEAR PATROL

Winter 2007 saw the first season of WWF's **Polar Bear Patrol**, an initiative to reduce human-polar bear conflicts in the villages along the arctic coast of Chukotka, Russia. As polar bears are forced to spend more and more time on land as the sea ice changes, the chances for dangerous situations for the local peoples also increases. This unique project, which was started as a cooperation between the native village of Vankarem (Chukotka, Russia), polar bear researchers and WWF-Russia, helps the communities to monitor and manage polar bears close to their villages without harming them. Already this winter, the initiative was expanded to the coast of Yakutia, and more locations are planned. For more information, visit the project's website (in English and Russian): www.umkypatrol.ru

