

2013 Arctic Report Card Released Today at AGU Fall Meeting

San Francisco, CA – While fewer snow and ice extremes occurred in 2013 relative to 2012, and environmental observations in Alaska and throughout the Arctic showed annual and regional variability, the impact of the region’s persistent, long-term warming trend remains demonstrable, according to the just-released 2013 Arctic Report Card, <http://www.arctic.noaa.gov/reportcard/>. The Report Card is a peer-reviewed source for environmental information on the current state of the Arctic relative to historical records.

The release of the 2013 Report Card was announced today at the American Geophysical Union’s Fall Meeting at a 9:00 am press conference at Moscone Center West (room 3001A) in San Francisco. Dr. Martin Jeffries, science advisor at the US Arctic Research Commission and principal editor of the report, was on the panel that described some of the highlights of 2013 in the Arctic.

Key observations revealed in the Report Card update show:

- Snow extent in May 2013 reached a new record low in Eurasia, due to above average air temperatures, while Northern Hemisphere-wide snow extent was below average for spring (April, May, June).
- Summer surface air temperatures were particularly low across the central Arctic Ocean, northern Canada and Greenland relative to 2007-2012 (a period of pronounced summer sea ice retreat), and were somewhat lower than the long-term average of 1981-2010.
- Minimum sea ice extent in September 2013 was not as low as the record minimum of 2012, but was nevertheless the sixth lowest since observations began in 1979 despite the relatively cool summer of 2013. The seven lowest ice extent minima have occurred in the last seven years, 2007-2013.
- Arctic tundra vegetation greenness (a measure of biological productivity) and growing season length have continued to increase since observations began in 1982.
- Large land mammals convey a mixed message, with Muskox numbers stable/increasing since the 1970s, while many caribou and reindeer herds currently have unusually low populations for the period 1970-2013.
- Changes in fish and bottom dwelling organisms include continued northward migration of species not previously seen in the Arctic.

“The Arctic Report Card illustrates the importance of long-term observations of the Arctic environment,” said Fran Ulmer, Chair, US Arctic Research Commission. “We need an integrated, pan-Arctic observing system that helps us better understand this sensitive region’s current changes and make improved projections for what the future holds.”

The 2013 Report Card comprises 18 essays prepared by an international team of 147 authors from 14 different countries. It is intended for a wide audience, including scientists, teachers, students, decision-makers and the general public interested in the Arctic environment and science.

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