

Arctic Report Card: Update for 2015

Tracking recent environmental changes



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What's new in 2015?

Maximum sea ice extent on 25 February was 15 days earlier than average and the lowest value on record (1979-present). **Minimum ice extent** in September was the 4th lowest on record. Sea ice continues to be younger and thinner: in February and March 2015 there was twice as much first-year ice as there was 30 years ago.

Changes in sea ice alone are having **profound effects on the marine ecosystem** (fishes, walruses, primary production) and **sea surface temperatures**.



Highlights

Air temperatures in all seasons between October 2014 and September 2015 exceeded 3°C above average over broad areas of the Arctic, while the annual average air temperature (+1.3°) over land was the highest since 1900.

Walruses are negatively affected by loss of sea ice habitat but positively affected by reduced hunting pressure, while sea ice loss and rising temperatures in the Barents Sea are causing a **poleward shift in fish communities**.

The 2nd lowest **June snow cover extent** on land continued a decrease that dates back to 1979, while **river discharge** from the great rivers of Eurasia and North America has increased during that time.

Widespread positive **sea surface temperature and primary production** anomalies occurred throughout the Arctic Ocean and adjacent seas as sea ice retreated in summer 2015.

Melting occurred over more than 50% of the **Greenland Ice Sheet** for the first time since the exceptional melting of 2012, and glaciers terminating in the ocean showed an increase in ice velocity and decrease in area.

Terrestrial vegetation productivity and above-ground biomass have been decreasing since 2011.

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