

Department of State

The Department of State continues to be involved in multilateral and bilateral activities related to environmental protection, sustainable development, and scientific research in the Arctic.

The Department of State leads the development of U.S. Arctic policy, a key component of U.S. foreign policy. In the international arena, U.S. policy in the Arctic focuses on environmental protection and sustainable development. In 1991 the United States, along with Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, and Sweden, agreed on the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS), designed to identify priorities for regional cooperation with regard to environmental protection in the Arctic.

In 1996 the eight Arctic countries signed a declaration establishing the Arctic Council. The Council took over the work of the AEPS and added issues related to sustainable development. The Council now includes four environmental working groups:

- Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP);
- Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF);
- Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR); and
- Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME).

A fifth subsidiary body, the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG), was established at the Arctic Council’s Ministerial meeting in Iqaluit, Canada, in 1998. The Council’s six Permanent Participants represent indigenous Arctic residents; four count Native communities in Alaska among their members. The Permanent Participants sit at the Arctic Council table and are a source of traditional knowledge for many council studies.

The State Department appoints the Senior Arctic Official, who represents the U.S. government at Council meetings. The U.S. served as the second chair of the Arctic Council in 1998–2000. The State Department’s Office of Oceans Affairs, which represents the U.S. on the Council, housed the Council’s secretariat during the U.S. chairmanship. During this time, the State Department improved the

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flow of communication among Council members and supported important initiatives on environmental protection and sustainable development. The U.S. continues to pursue these goals and remains a leader on the Council. The U.S. chaired CAFF from 2002 to 2004 and in 2003 assumed the chair of the Arctic Council Action Plan to Eliminate Pollution in the Arctic (ACAP). The U.S. became chair of AMAP in 2004. Finland chaired the Council in 2000–2002, and Iceland assumed the chair for 2002–2004. Russia chairs the Council for 2004–2006. Norway will chair the Council for 2006–2008.

The State Department has provided financial support for many recent Council initiatives. The Department contributed to an ACAP activity to reduce dioxins and furans. The ACAP, approved at the 2000 ministerial meeting in Barrow, Alaska, outlines actions to address some of the pollution threats in the Arctic identified during the first AMAP assessments, such as PCBs, pesticides, and mercury. The State Department provided funds to support U.S. authors’ contributions to the *Arctic Human Development Report*, a comprehensive and scientifically based overview and assessment of human conditions in the entire circumpolar region written for the nonspecialist. The State Department contributed to developing and implementing integrated ecosystem management strategies in the Russian Arctic, and it supported the Arctic Council’s work at the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Department helped fund the participation of indigenous residents of Alaska in the Arctic Council, contributing to the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat and supporting indigenous Alaskan delegates’ travel to Arctic Council meetings and an all-Alaska delegation to the Taking Wing conference on gender equality in the Arctic.

Another Arctic Council initiative backed by the U.S. is the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA). With NOAA and NSF funding, this comprehensive effort, which has the support of all Council members, evaluates and synthesizes knowledge on climate change, climate variability, and increased ultraviolet radiation and their consequences on the Arctic environment. The final report was approved in November 2004. The ACAP steering committee delivered a 120-page summary of the results to the ministerial meeting in Reykjavik in November 2004, and the ministers approved a policy statement based on the report at their meeting. The final 1,000-page report was published in 2005 and is available from Cambridge University Press (www.cambridge.org).

The U.S. is taking the lead on other circumpolar efforts of the Arctic Council. Under the PAME banner, the U.S., along with Canada and Finland, is launching an assessment of the current state of Arctic marine shipping and the potential of shipping in a warming Arctic, scheduled to be delivered in 2008.

In the area of sustainable development, the U.S. focuses on human health in the Arctic. The

State Department took the lead in developing and proposing a large-scale human health project for the Arctic Council for the International Polar Year. The Arctic Human Health Initiative includes existing projects and encourages the development of additional projects to assess and improve the health of Arctic residents. The State Department, along with the State of Alaska, is coordinating Council members' activities in the area of telemedicine. The State Department supports the project led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on emerging infectious disease in the Arctic.

As coordinator of U.S. international policy concerning the Arctic, the Department of State welcomes input from individuals and agencies with an interest in participating in the work of the Arctic Council or contributing to the knowledge base that underlies the Council's working groups. Interested parties are encouraged to visit the Arctic Council web site at www.arctic-council.org. The web site lists current and future activities of the Council, as well as the names and addresses of individuals and secretariats related to specific aspects of the Council's work.