

Issues from the Polar Regions



Defining the Polar Regions

The Polar Regions are characterized by the regions at the extreme southern and northern ends of the planet

- Demarcated as the lands in the high latitudes above the Arctic or Antarctic Circles.



Alternative Classifications of Arctic Region

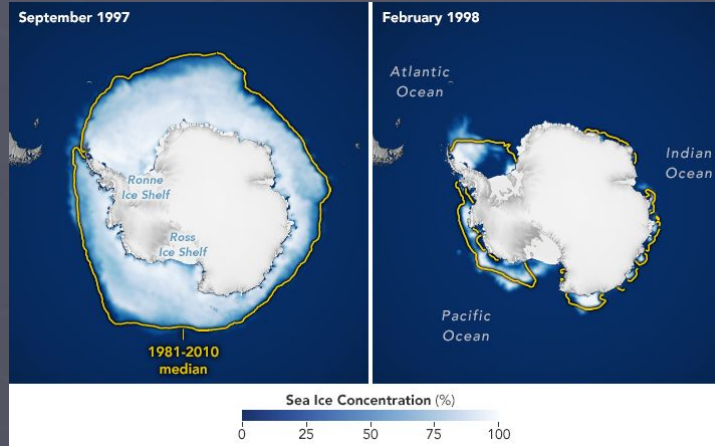
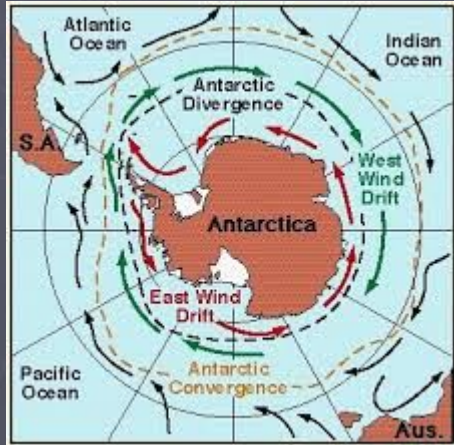
- Temperature and precipitation patterns
- Seasonal flora similarities
- Presence of permafrost
- Growing season
- Periods of 24 hour sun and 24 hour night
- Cold-weather fauna adaptations
- Ice caps



Antarctic

The southern continent of Antarctica is characterized by land permanently covered with ice, with seasonal changes in surrounding sea ice.

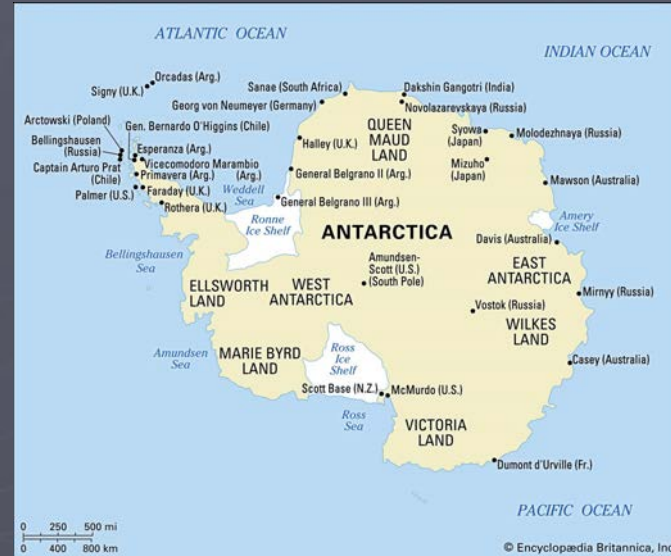
- Sea Ice grows to effectively double the size of the continent in winter
- Region demarcated by Antarctic Convergence



Antarctica as a Continent

Antarctica is primarily made up of continent and outlying islands (most notable of which is South Shetland Islands)

Though there are scientific stations, there are no permanent human residents in Antarctica



1 - No military use

6 - Applies to land
but not seas

2 - Freedom
of scientific
investigation

7 - All stations open
to inspection by
other nations

3 - Free exchange
of scientific plans
and data

The Antarctic Treaty Main Points

8 - National laws
apply to citizens
not to areas

4 - Any territorial
claims put on hold



9 - The treaty may
be modified at any
time, requires
unanimous
agreement of
treaty nations

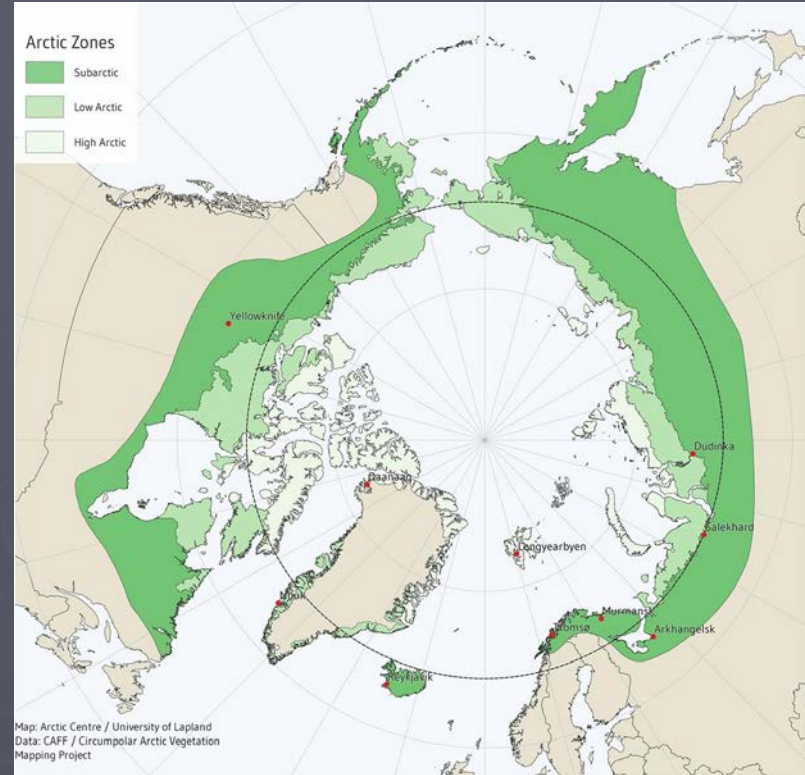
5 - Nuclear free
zone

10 - All treaty nations to
ensure no-one carries out
acts against the treaty

The Arctic

The northern top of the planet is only covered by sea ice and void of land except for islands.

- Land made up of territory from Canada, USA, Russia, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland.
- Largest islands include Greenland (Den.) Ellesmere (Can.), Baffin (Can.), Svalbard (Nor.), Severnaya Zemlya (Rus.), Yuzhny Island (Rus.)



Human Habitation

Only Polar region with and permanent human settlement

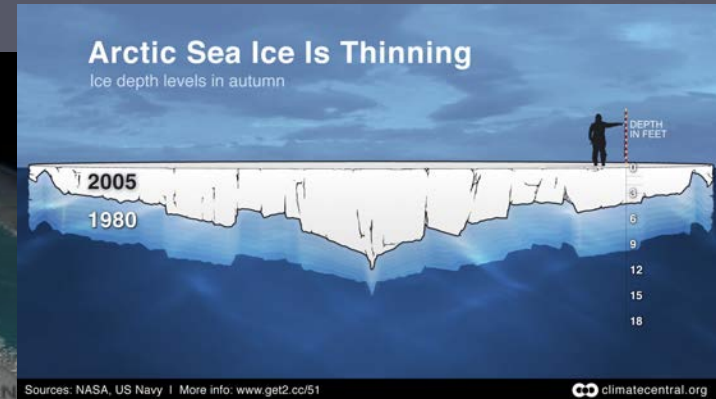
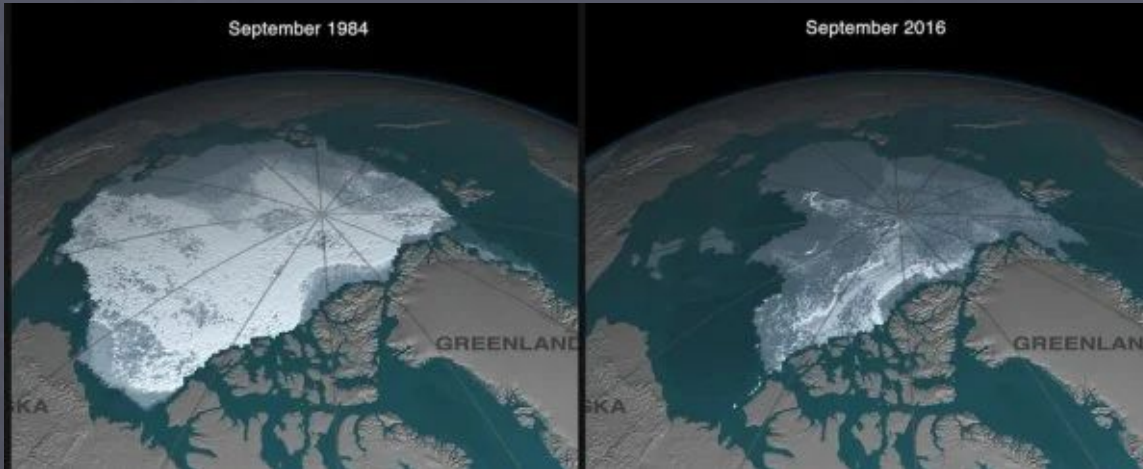
- Native rights vs. national interests



Shrinking Sea Ice

Changes in seasonal ice coverage as a result of climate change.

- Linked to global warming
- Leading to decreasing coverage and difficulties for animals who depend on sea ice.



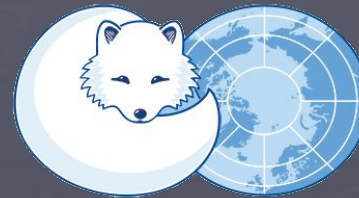
The Opening of the Northwest Passage



The Arctic Council

Made up of 8 Arctic States & 6 Permanent members of Indigenous Ethnic groups

Group meant to foster cooperation and communication between stakeholders in the Arctic



ARCTIC COUNCIL

