

# ICES WGICA REPORT 2019

INTEGRATED ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENTS STEERING GROUP

ICES CM 2019/IEASG:11

REF SCICOM AND ACOM

## Interim Report of the ICES/PICES/PAME Working Group for Integrated Ecosystem Assessment of the Central Arctic Ocean (WGICA)

8-10 May 2019

Sapporo, Japan



**ICES**

International Council for  
the Exploration of the Sea

**CIEM**

Conseil International pour  
l'Exploration de la Mer

## **International Council for the Exploration of the Sea Conseil International pour l'Exploration de la Mer**

H. C. Andersens Boulevard 44–46  
DK-1553 Copenhagen V  
Denmark  
Telephone (+45) 33 38 67 00  
Telefax (+45) 33 93 42 15  
[www.ices.dk](http://www.ices.dk)  
[info@ices.dk](mailto:info@ices.dk)

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## **Executive summary**

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The joint ICES-PICES-PAME Working Group on Integrated Ecosystem Assessment for the Central Arctic Ocean (WGICA) provide integrated ecosystem assessments (IEAs), including ecosystem overviews, for the Central Arctic Ocean (CAO). Over the last few decades, about half the area and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the volume of the minimum sea ice in summer have been lost with a pronounced change from thick and old multi-year ice to now mostly thin and young ice (the 'Great melt'). The working group aims to improve the understanding how much Great melt affects to climate and ecosystem variability of the core ICES area in the North Atlantic as well as in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska in the North Pacific.

The main product from 2016-2018 is the first IEA report for the CAO ecosystem: "Integrated Ecosystem Assessment of the Central Arctic Ocean: Ecosystem description and vulnerability characterization" which are delayed to 2020. The CAO have few biological and oceanographic time series available to describe status and changes of the ecosystem. WGICA will therefore seek to increase the use of satellite remote sensing data and numerical model output data for deriving information on changing of environment and lower trophic level ecosystem. WGICA will compile the result from ongoing and recent changes and events in the CAO ecosystem (ToR b) and new studies on fish (ToR e), such as the MOSAiC expedition (2019-2020) and the international Synoptic Arctic Survey (SAS).

The main product of 2019-2021 is a second IEA report for the CAO ecosystem focusing ecosystem overview (EO) and vulnerability. A vulnerability characterization includes an assessment of human activities (climate and climate change (ToR c), contaminants and pollution (ToR d), shipping (including tourism), and potential future fisheries) and their pressures and impacts on the ecosystem.

## 1 Administrative details

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**Working Group name**

ICES/PICES/PAME Working Group for Integrated Ecosystem Assessment of the Central Arctic Ocean – WGICA

**Year of Appointment within the current three-year cycle**

2019

**Reporting year concluding the current three-year cycle**

3

**Chairs**

John Bengtson, (ICES), USA

Sei-Ichi Saitoh (PICES), Japan

Hein Rune Skjoldal (PAME)

**Meeting venues and dates**

8-10 May 2019, Sapporo, Japan, number of participants:26

24–26 April 2018, Newfoundland, Canada, number of participants: 21

19–21 April 2017, Seattle, USA, number of participants: 33

24–26 May 2016, ICES HQ, Denmark, number of participants: 18

## 2 Terms of Reference a) – g)

TOR	DESCRIPTION	BACKGROUND	LINKS TO THE SEVEN ICES SCIENCE PRIORITY AREAS AS PROPOSED BY SCICOM	DURATION	EXPECTED DELIVERABLES
a	Review and consider approaches and methodologies for conducting an IEA of the CAO ecosystem.	WGICA has produced a first version IEA report for the CAO. Before producing an updated and extended version, the basic approach and methodologies should again be considered.	Codes 2.2, 6.1, 6.5	Year 1	Report outcome in the 2019 interim report.
b	Review and report on on-going and recent changes and events in the CAO ecosystem associated with changes such as in sea-ice, oceanographic circulation, and hydrographic properties.	There is a need to follow developments in the CAO resulting from the predicted further loss of sea ice and other physical changes associated with global climate change.	Codes 1.1, 2.2, 6.5	Years 1-3	New information will be reported in interim reports in 2019 and 2020. A more full account will be given as part of a second version IEA report for the CAO in 2021.
c	Continue to examine effects of climate change on the CAO ecosystem by compiling and reviewing information on changes in response to the ongoing 'Great melt', and assess likely consequences to the CAO ecosystem of projected future changes associated with further loss of sea-ice and other climate-related changes (i.e., a climate impact assessment).	This activity was started in the first 3-year period, and some information is included in the 2018 IEA report. There is a need to continue and carry out a more detailed assessment of the documented and/or inferred biological and ecological changes associated with the large physical changes that have already taken place (e.g. loss of half the area and ¾ of volume of summer sea ice).	Codes 1.1, 1.3, 6.1, 6.5	Years 1-3	Progress will be reported in interim reports in 2019 and 2020. A more full account will be given as part of the new version of the IEA report for the CAO in 2021.

d	Assess the consequences of recent and on-going climatic and oceanographic changes on transport pathways (physical and biological) and potential effects of contaminants in the CAO ecosystem.	This is a new activity which relates to assessment of pollution in the CAO. Pollution can be expected to be one of the more serious threat to the CAO ecosystem and should be included in an IEA.	Codes 2.1, 2.5, 6.1	Years 2, 3	Progress will be reported in interim report in 2020. Aspects of pollution will be included in the new IEA report for the CAO in 2021.
e	Review and report on new studies on fish as well as other biological components of the CAO ecosystem.	The information on many parts of the CAO ecosystem is still limited. New information is expected to come over the next few years as research ice-breakers pay more attention and use scientific echosounders and other observation techniques to record fish and other organisms in the water column and at the seafloor.	Codes 5.2, 6.1, 6.5, 6.6	Years 1-3	Progress will be reported in interim reports in 2019 and 2020. A more full account will be given as part of the new version of the IEA report for the CAO in 2021.
f	Continue to identify priority research needs and monitor how identified knowledge gaps (needed to improve IEA and management effectiveness) are being addressed and filled.	A byproduct of doing the first version IEA of the CAO is a priority list of research needs. It is necessary to monitor how knowledge gaps are filled that will improve new versions of IEA.	Codes 1.3, 2.2, 3.1, 6.1, 6.5	Years 2, 3	Progress will be reported in the interim report in 2020 and outcome reported in 2021.
g	Prepare an Ecosystem Overview for the CAO ecosystem	This will be an addition to the series of Ecosystem Overviews prepared by ICES.	6.5, 6.6	Years 2, 3	Draft version will be reported in the interim report in 2020 and final version reported in 2021.

### 3 Summary of Work plan

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<b>Year 1</b>	Review IEA methodologies for IEA of the CAO. Review and report new information and changes in the CAO ecosystem.
<b>Year 2</b>	Review and report new information and changes in the CAO ecosystem. Address pathways and effects of contaminants, make an initial list of research needs, and prepare draft Ecosystem Overview.
<b>Year 3</b>	Prepare a second version IEA report for the CAO with information on status and trends, including impacts of climate change, pollution, and other relevant human pressures. Report on research needs and prepare final draft of Ecosystem Overview.

#### **4 Conduct of the meeting**

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The meeting was held at CRIS building 4th floor Room B&C, Hokkaido University, in Sapporo, with Emi Yoshida from Arctic Research Center as local host. She provided nice weather, and Sapporo proudly displayed its natural and historical setting near the central Hokkaido. The meeting started at 10 am on Wednesday 8 May and closed at 3 pm on Friday 10 May.

The meeting was attended by 26 participants from 6 countries (Canada, Japan, Korea, Norway, Sweden and United States of America). The list of participants is included as Annex 1.

The agenda for the meeting is given in Annex 2. In presentations and discussion, information on the various parts of the ecosystem of the central Arctic Ocean (CAO), from physics through lower trophic levels to birds and mammals, was considered with emphasis on spatial aspects and trophic linkages. The issues of vulnerability and linkages between ecosystem components (species and groups of organisms) and human sectors, activities and pressures in the context of Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) were also on the agenda.

The presentations given at the meeting will be uploaded on the ICES SharePoint site for WGICA.

## **5 Outcome of the meeting**

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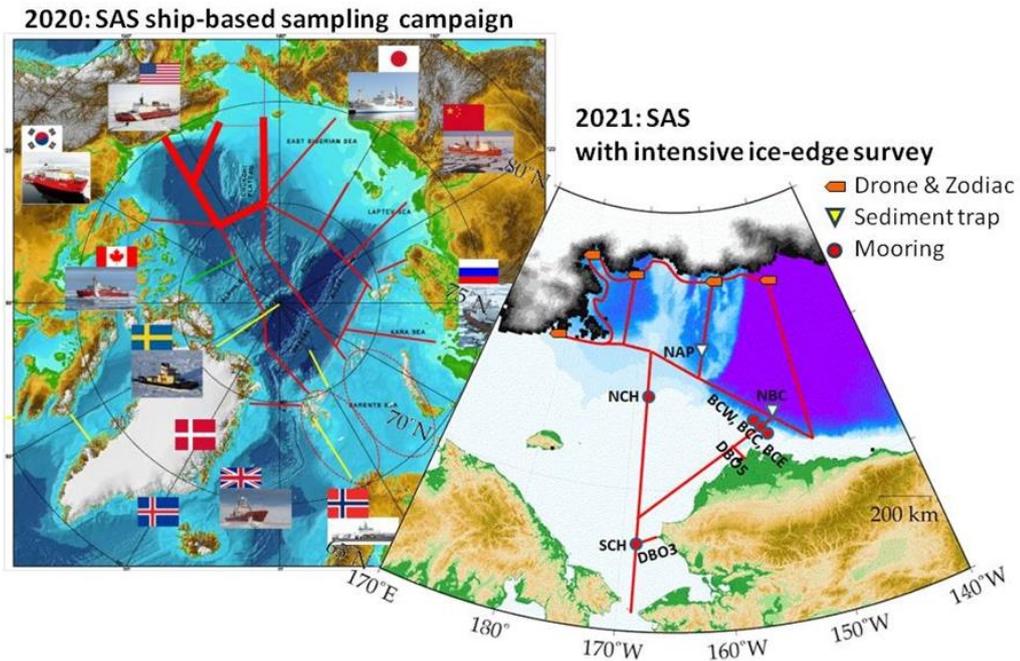
### **5.1 Approaches and methodologies for conducting an IEA of the CAO ecosystem (ToR a)**

The approach taken for the first IEA report has largely been compilation of information through review of scientific literature. Members of WGICA have also brought with them new information from recent cruises and studies conducted in the CAO and the Atlantic and Pacific gateways leading into it. The CAO differs from other LMEs in having few biological and oceanographic time series available to describe status and changes of the ecosystem. Exceptions to this are satellite-based monitoring of sea ice and some oceanographic parameters which provides a very important source of information on the CAO. Most of the information on recent changes in oceanography and biology come from the many investigations carried out for many different scientific purposes by research icebreakers from many nations. Taken together, this provides a mosaic of information which can be used to describe the ecosystem and recent and on-going changes taking place.

The ‘scientific review’ method will continue to be a main avenue for compiling information and assessing the changing state of the CAO ecosystem. In addition, WGICA seek to increase the use of satellite-based remote sensing of ocean color and derived information on phytoplankton biomass, composition and production. We also foresee more use of mathematical modelling, particularly 3-D physical models to explore and describe water circulation and oceanographic features. We will also attempt to use 1-D models to assess in more detail the vertical processes and nutrient fluxes which determine rates of primary production in the strongly stratified CAO ecosystem.

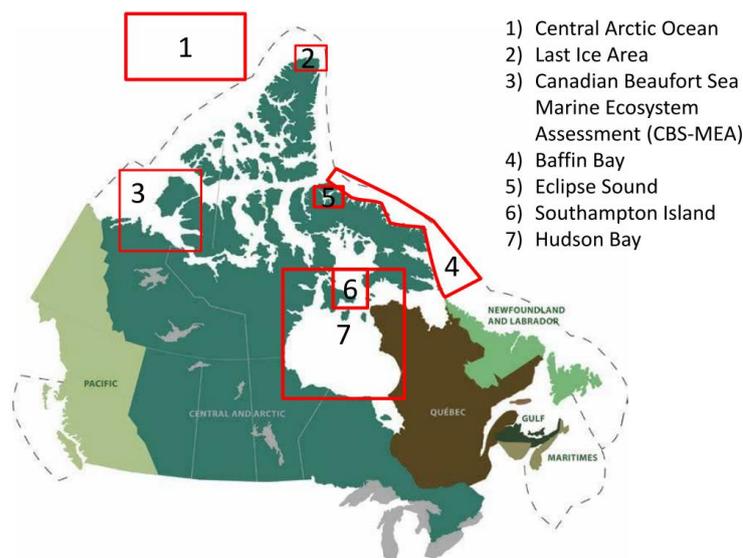
### **5.2 Ongoing and recent changes and events in the CAO ecosystem (ToR b) and New studies on fish (ToR e)**

Shigeto Nishino (JAMSTEC) gave a presentation on R/V Mirai cruises and their contributions to IEA CAO. The R/V Mirai has conducted Arctic research cruises under two Japanese projects, GRENE and ArCS. During the periods of GRENE and ArCS projects, we have mainly focused on the northern Bering and Chukchi seas, because there are several biological hotspots that are associated with not only environmental but also potentially economic and social issues. The research findings obtained by the R/V Mirai cruises could contribute to the integrated ecosystem assessment (IEA) in the Pacific gateway of the central Arctic Ocean. To further help develop the IEA of the central Arctic Ocean (IEA CAO), we will extend the research area to the deep Canada Basin including the marginal ice zone where the ocean environment and ecosystem are not well studied. We are now planning the R/V Mirai Arctic cruises in collaboration with the Synoptic Arctic Survey (SAS), which is a coordinated multi-ship, multi-nation pan-Arctic ship-based sampling campaign to be conducted in 2020 and 2021 (see Fig. 5.1).



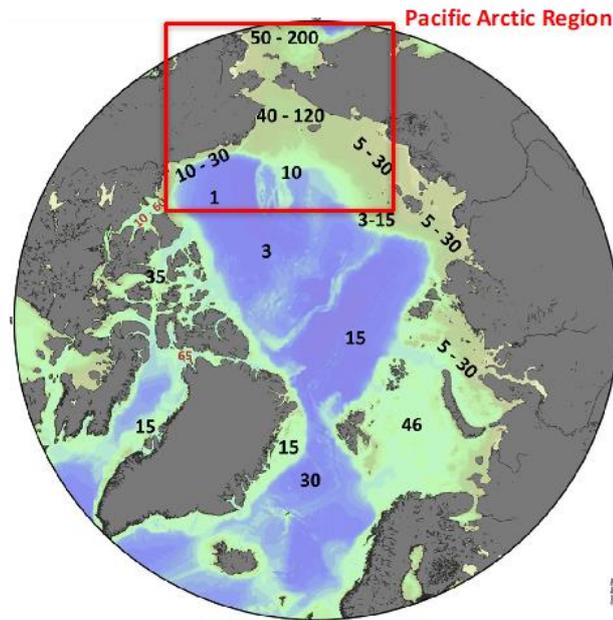
**Figure 5.1. Planned R/V Mirai Arctic Ocean cruises in 2020 and 2021.**

Kevin Hedges (Fisheries and Oceans Canada) gave a presentation on Canadian Research and Monitoring Relevant to the Central Arctic Ocean. He provided updated information on scientific activities in the Canadian Arctic including in the CAO. Canada is actively involved in the FiSCAO (Fish Stocks in the Central Arctic Ocean) process where a mapping survey and monitoring program are now being considered. The 'Last ice area' is the sea area north of Ellesmere Island which is considered of 'Outstanding Universal Value' due to the remaining multi-year sea ice and the specific conditions in this area. Scientific studies and conservation efforts aim to elucidate the biodiversity of habitats, species and genetics of this special area and include the use of autonomous moorings and surface instruments, as well as marine mammal surveys. The Canadian Beaufort Sea Marine Ecosystem Assessment (CBS MEA) is a continuation of the Beaufort Regional Ecosystem Assessment Marine Fishes Project (BREA MFP). The program addresses the variability and climate-driven change of forage species and ecosystem linkages, aiming to support co-management priorities, e.g., related to the food-base for marine mammals and subsistence fishes. Other activities include a multispecies survey (focused on Greenland halibut) and several exploratory inshore surveys in Baffin Bay and Davis Strait, as well as an ecosystem study around Southampton Island in northern Hudson Bay. These studies address habitat use, movement patterns, stock structure and trophic interactions of fish species and other compartments of the marine ecosystems in the eastern Canadian Arctic.



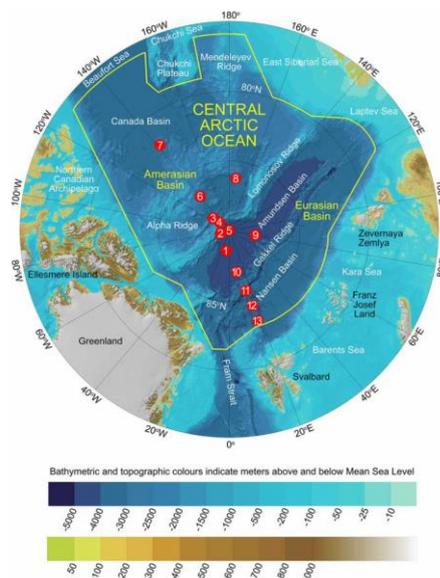
**Figure 5.2. Map showing areas of dedicated research activities in the Canadian Arctic.**

Jacqueline Grebmeier ( University of Maryland) gave a presentation on The Pacific Arctic: A Key Gateway Influencing the Central Arctic Ocean. The goals of the Pacific Arctic Gateway activity in the WGICA are to describe the status and trends of ecosystem components in the region and the connection of these parameters to the Central Arctic Ocean. The Pacific Arctic Gateway has experienced rapid environmental change in recent years due to reduced sea ice extent (Frey et al. 2018) and seawater warming (Timmermans et al. 2017) that can impact shelf-basin exchange of water mass components and biological taxa into the offshore Arctic basin. The Chukchi Sea shelf system supports the highest annual net community production (40-120 g C/y) compared to the other Arctic shelf systems, with the lowest NCP in the CAO (Figure 5.3; Tremblay et al. 2015). *Calanus glacialis* is the common Pacific Arctic zooplankton over the shelf, but it has not been detected in any significant levels in the Canada Basin (Nelson et al. 2014). Similarly, the highest macrofaunal biomass occurs on the Pacific Arctic shelf regions (10-200 gC/m<sup>2</sup>), dominated by amphipods, bivalves, and polychaetes, with the lowest biomass of small organisms in the Canada Basin (Bluhm and Grebmeier 2011). Most observations of seabirds, marine mammals and fish utilize the high prey items over the Pacific Arctic shelf region (CAFF 2017). However, the limited sampling in the offshore Arctic Basin and CAO limit our understanding of the status and trends of these organisms in an ecosystem evaluation. In order to evaluate the connection of the shelf regions to the CAO the international Synoptic Arctic Survey (SAS) is under development for multiple cruises in the Pacific sector in 2020 and 2021 coincident with other pan-Arctic cruises. The goal of the SAS is to investigate physical forcing, carbon cycling, and ecosystem response in the water and sediments that can provide valuable data towards an ecosystem assessment of the shelf-to-basin ecosystem connectivity. Further details available in the international SAS science plan (<http://www.synopticarcticssurvey.info/splan.html>) and recent 2019 SAS workshop report (<https://web.who.edu/sas2019/>).



**Figure 5.3. Coarse spatial distribution of annual NCP (g C/ yr) across different sectors of the Arctic Ocean (composite from Tremblay et al. 2015).**

Pauline Snoeijis Leijonmalm (Stockholm University, Sweden) gave a presentation on A deep scattering layer under the North Pole sea ice. She was presenting the 2016 Oden data, the manuscript of which will be submitted for publication before 15 May 2019. The lecture also briefly summarized the future plans for using the MOSAiC (2019-2020) and the Oden (2020) expeditions as ships-of-opportunity for the EFICA Consortium to collect new fish data. Like in the Archangelsk (Russia) meeting in April, the new acoustic data from Oden were received with great enthusiasm and were referred to often during the rest of the workshop.



Good data were available from 13 stations

**Figure 5.4. Map of acoustic observation stations by RV Oden**

Hyoung Chul Shin (Korean Polar Research Institute (KOPRI)) gave presentation on CAO fisheries agreement, at last and then, what? He provided status on CAO fisheries agreement and some information from the meeting on Central Arctic Ocean Monitoring Program held in Arkhangelsk, Russia April 12-13, 2019. Practically a moratorium for commercial fishing in CAO is for 16 years Regulation of fisheries that have not even started. No permit issued for commercial fishing until proper management regime in place until good science and adequate information. Parties meeting at least every 2 years Scientists must meet 3 months before and advise Joint science program will have to be developed in 3 year time. No scientist meetings commissioned or requested to directly serve Governments.

FiSCAO; more of individual expert meeting, although supposedly government commissioned

WGICA (ICES, PAME and PICES); more of international body initiation

H.C. Shin also gave a presentation on Korean Arctic Ocean studies with emphasis on ecosystem dynamics. He provided updated information on Korean Arctic Ocean studies during 2010-2017 using IBRV Araon (Figure 5.5). He introduced the result of study on phytoplankton community distribution in the Chukchi and East Siberian Seas. Future studies are summarized as follows:

1. Investigating the phytoplankton community structure & the primary production
2. Assessing the responses of phytoplankton community to a range of light conditions and Nutrients enrichment

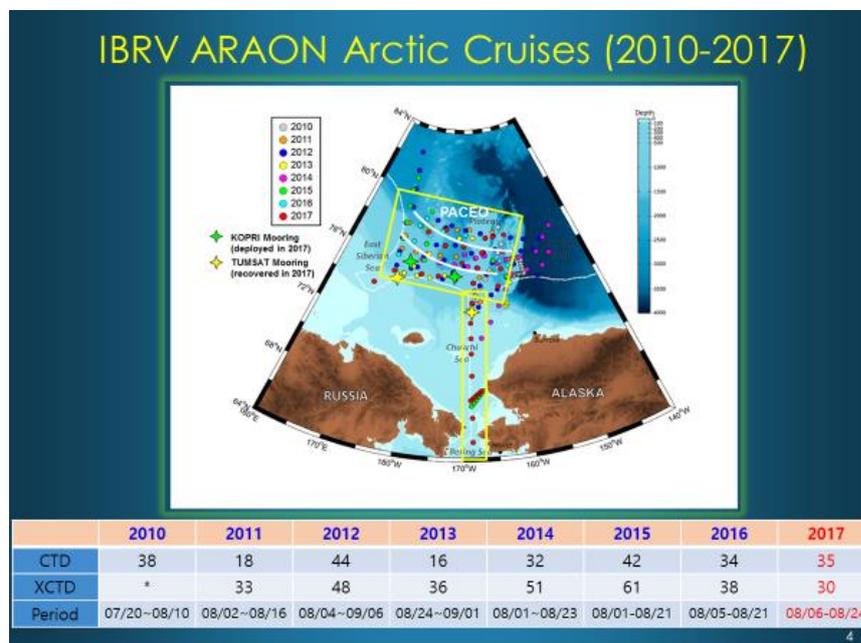


Figure 5.5. Map of Arctic cruises by IBRV Araon in 2010-2017

### 5.3 Effects of climate change on the CAO ecosystem (ToR c)

The CAO ecosystem is undergoing substantial change associated with the massive and dramatic loss of sea ice, most pronounced in summer but also reflected in winter ice

conditions. As a trend over the last few decades, about half the area and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the volume of the minimum sea ice in summer have been lost with a pronounced change from thick and old multi-annual ice to now mostly thin and young ice. This change which already has happened has been described as the 'Great melt'.

We plan to summarize the documented or inferred biological and ecological changes associated with the Great melt. This will be through a scientific literature review of what have been found in the many recent studies in the CAO, including relevant information provided by working group members from on-going studies.

#### **5.4 Transport pathways and potential effects of contaminants (ToR d)**

Pollution is a new item to be addressed in more detail by WGICA in the next IEA report planned for 2021. Pollution is a complex issue as evidenced by the extensive work on this topic by AMAP. For the CAO there are two aspects which we aim to examine: transport pathways and potential biological or ecological effects. AMAP produced a report on pathways in 2003 (Macdonald, R.W., T. Harner, J. Fyfe, H. Loeng and T. Weingartner, 2003. AMAP Assessment 2002: The Influence of Global Change on Contaminant Pathways to, within, and from the Arctic. Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), Oslo, Norway. xii+65 pp.). This report highlighted the combined effects of climate change on both physical and biological pathways of contaminants in the environment and food webs. We will build on this to address the changes in main pathways of contaminants using updated information on physical changes and trophic linkages in food webs. To the extent possible, we will also examine potential effects on biological compartments of the CAO ecosystem.

The work on this item requires a strengthening of the expertise on contaminants and pollution in the working group. We seek collaboration with AMAP to help us provide the necessary expertise. ICES has a Working Group on Biological Effects on Contaminants (WGBEC). We are also seeking collaboration with this group to help us with this new ToR on contaminants and pollution.

#### **5.5 Ecosystem overview for the CAO (ToR g)**

ICES are producing ecosystem overviews of various ecoregions (which correspond broadly to LMEs, e.g. the Barents Sea) in the ICES area following a template with sections on ecoregion description, key signals, pressures, and state of the ecosystem.

Inigo Martinez from the ICES secretariat provided a presentation with background information on the ICES ecosystem overviews. At this meeting the information was noted. WGICA plans to produce a draft Ecosystem overview for the CAO next year, to be revised and finalized for delivery to ICES in 2021. The information on the state of the ecosystem and pressures from human activities will be taken from the first (2018) and second (2021) IEA reports for the CAO (see below).

#### **5.6 Completion of the first IEA report (2016-2018)**

The main product from the first three years of work (2016-2018) of WGICA is an IEA report for the CAO:

***Integrated Ecosystem Assessment of the Central Arctic Ocean: Ecosystem description and vulnerability characterization.***

An outline of the report was agreed at the 3rd meeting of WGICA in St. John's last year. This comprised chapters on various compartments of the CAO ecosystem including physics, lower trophic levels, fish, birds, and marine mammals. The intersessional work on the report has followed the structure agreed in St. John's. The aim was to finish the report in early 2019 in time for the Arctic Council ministerial meeting in May of this year. We did not meet this deadline and work to complete the report has continued after spring.

The first report of WGICA is descriptive and contains a vulnerability analysis (as far as possible with the limited data), which is the first step of an IEA. There is now a first version of the manuscript (about 200 pages). In the Sapporo meeting this manuscript was carefully discussed, restructured at the chapter level, and a time schedule was agreed upon. According to this schedule, the CAO IEA Part 1 Report will be delivered in November 2019. The chapters of the report will be: Introduction (Purpose of this IEA for the CAO, Definition of the CAO, Map of the area and LMEs), Overview of the CAO (CAO key features, Pacific gateway, Atlantic gateway), Description of the CAO ecosystem (Climate, oceanography, sea ice, Pelagic and sympagic algae, Pelagic and sympagic bacteria, Zooplankton and ice fauna, fish and fish stocks, seabirds, marine mammals), and Vulnerability analysis.

The report will be published in the series of ICES Cooperative Research Reports. ICES will provide technical editing including peer review as part of the editorial process. At the time of finishing this meeting report (October 2019) we note further delay in finalizing the report. The co-chairs will meet in mid-October to discuss progress with the aim to provide a final draft report to ICES in December 2019.

## **5.7 A second IEA report for the CAO ecosystem in 2021**

The work on the various ToRs of the 2019-2021 work plan (see Annex 1) will be drawn together and used as components of a next IEA report for the CAO ecosystem. This will build on the first report, which contains a description of the ecosystem and a first vulnerability characterization, to go in more detail into an assessment of human activities and their pressures and impacts on the ecosystem. This will include climate and climate change (ToR c), contaminants and pollution (ToR d), shipping (including tourism), and potential future fisheries.

A more detailed plan of the second IEA report will be prepared in 2020.

## **6 Next meeting**

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Venue and time for a next meeting in 2020 have not yet been decided.

## Annex 1: List of participants

Name	Institute	Country	E-mail
John L. Bengtson	NOAA Fisheries	USA	<a href="mailto:john.bengtson@noaa.gov">john.bengtson@noaa.gov</a>
Yasushi Fukamachi	Hokkaido University	Japan	<a href="mailto:yasuf@arc.hokudai.ac.jp">yasuf@arc.hokudai.ac.jp</a>
Jacqueline Mary Grebmeier	University of Maryland	USA	<a href="mailto:jgrebmei@umces.edu">jgrebmei@umces.edu</a>
Naomi Harada	Japan Marine-Earth Science and Technology	Japan	<a href="mailto:haradan@jamstec.go.jp">haradan@jamstec.go.jp</a>
Kevin James Hedges	Fisheries and Oceans Canada	Canada	<a href="mailto:Kevin.Hedges@dfo-mpo.gc.ca">Kevin.Hedges@dfo-mpo.gc.ca</a>
Taka Hirata	Hokkaido University	Japan	<a href="mailto:tahi@arc.hokudai.ac.jp">tahi@arc.hokudai.ac.jp</a>
Toru Hirawake	Hokkaido University	Japan	<a href="mailto:hirawake@fish.hokudai.ac.jp">hirawake@fish.hokudai.ac.jp</a>
Henry P. Huntington	Ocean Conservancy	USA	<a href="mailto:hhuntington@oceanconservancy.org">hhuntington@oceanconservancy.org</a>
Osamu Inagaki	Kobe University	Japan	<a href="mailto:osamui@people.kobe-u.ac.jp">osamui@people.kobe-u.ac.jp</a>
Takashi Kikuchi	Japan Marine-Earth Science and Technology	Japan	<a href="mailto:takashik@jamstec.go.jp">takashik@jamstec.go.jp</a>
Xiaoyang Li	Hokkaido University	China	<a href="mailto:lixiaoyang@arc.hokudai.ac.jp">lixiaoyang@arc.hokudai.ac.jp</a>
Shigeto Nishino	Japan Marine-Earth Science and Technology	Japan	<a href="mailto:nishinos@jamstec.go.jp">nishinos@jamstec.go.jp</a>
Masayo Ogi	Hokkaido University	Japan	<a href="mailto:ogi.masayo@oeic.hokudai.ac.jp">ogi.masayo@oeic.hokudai.ac.jp</a>
Fujio Ohnishi	Hokkaido University	Japan	<a href="mailto:fujio.ohnishi@arc.hokudai.ac.jp">fujio.ohnishi@arc.hokudai.ac.jp</a>
Natsuhiko Otsuka	Hokkaido University	Japan	<a href="mailto:natsuhiko.otsuka@arc.hokudai.ac.jp">natsuhiko.otsuka@arc.hokudai.ac.jp</a>
Yipeng Qiu	Hokkaido University	China	<a href="mailto:qiuyipeng0316@yahoo.co.jp">qiuyipeng0316@yahoo.co.jp</a>
Sei-ichi Saitoh	Hokkaido University	Japan	<a href="mailto:ssaitoh@arc.hokudai.ac.jp">ssaitoh@arc.hokudai.ac.jp</a>

Hyoung Chul Shin	Korean Polar Research Institute (KOPRI)	Republic of Korea	<a href="mailto:hcshin@kopri.re.kr">hcshin@kopri.re.kr</a>
Hein Rune Skjoldal	Institute of Marine Research	Norway	<a href="mailto:hein.rune.skjoldal@hi.no">hein.rune.skjoldal@hi.no</a>
Pauline Snoeij Leijonmalm	Stockholm University	Sweden	<a href="mailto:pauline.snoeijs-leijonmalm@su.se">pauline.snoeijs-leijonmalm@su.se</a>
Lisa Speer	Natural Resources Defense Council	USA	<a href="mailto:lspeer@nrdc.org">lspeer@nrdc.org</a>
Minori Takahashi	Hokkaido University	Japan	<a href="mailto:minoritakahashi@slav.hokudai.ac.jp">minoritakahashi@slav.hokudai.ac.jp</a>
Masato Tanaka	Hokkaido University	Japan	<a href="mailto:mtanaka@arc.hokudai.ac.jp">mtanaka@arc.hokudai.ac.jp</a>
Cecilie von Quillfeldt	Norwegian Polar Institute	Norway	<a href="mailto:Cecilie.quillfeldt@npolar.no">Cecilie.quillfeldt@npolar.no</a>
Senjie Yang	Hokkaido University	China	<a href="mailto:76008563@qu.com">76008563@qu.com</a>
Toya Yukawa	Hokkaido University	Japan	<a href="mailto:outdoor1026@gmail.com">outdoor1026@gmail.com</a>

## Annex 2: Agenda

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### Wednesday, 8 May – Day 1

- 10:00 Welcome, introductions, and practical information
- Welcome by host
  - Introductions by Co-chairs
  - Introductions of participants
  - Practical information on meeting, facilities etc.
- 10:20 Adoption of agenda and arrangements for the report of the meeting
- Review of terms of reference
  - Goal of the meeting
  - Adoption of agenda
  - Assignment of rapporteurs
- 12:00 Lunch break
- 13:00 Ongoing and recent changes and events in the CAO ecosystem (ToR b)
- Climate, oceanography and sea ice
- (Nishino) R/V Mirai cruises and their contributions to IEA CAO
- (Kevin Hedges) Canadian Research and Monitoring Relevant to the Central Arctic Ocean
- Pacific gateway
- (Jacqueline Grebmeier) The Pacific Arctic: A Key Gateway Influencing the Central Arctic Ocean
- Primary production
- (Hein Rune Skjoldal) TBD
- 15:00 Break
- 15:30 Ongoing and recent changes and events in the CAO ecosystem (ToR b)(continued)
- Zooplankton and ice biota
- Fish
- (Snoeijs Leijonmalm Sweden) A deep scattering layer under the North Pole sea ice
- Birds
- Marine mammals
- (John Bengston) TBD
- 17:30 Close of meeting day 1
- 18:00-19:30 Welcome Reception (Restaurant Elm, Faculty House, N12W6 in Campus)

**Thursday 9 May – Day 2**

- 09:30 Summary day 1
- 10:00 Climate change and effects on the CAO ecosystem (ToR c)
- 10:30 Break
- 11:00 A Climate change and effects on the CAO ecosystem (ToR c) (continued)
- 12:00 Lunch
- 13:00 Approaches and methodologies for IEA (ToR a)
- (H.C. Shin) Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement and Incubating the Science Leadership: Acting Early for Later Pay-off
- 15:00 Break
- 15:30 Initial consideration of how to address contaminants and pollution in the CAO (ToR d)
- 17:30 Close of meeting day 2
- 19:00-21:00 Group Dinner (Sapporo Beer Garden)

**Friday 10 May – Day 3**

- 09:30 Summary day 2
- 10:00 New studies on fish and other components of the CAO ecosystem (ToR e)
- 10:30 Break
- 11:00 Ecosystem overview for the CAO - initial planning (ToR f)
- 12:00 Lunch
- 13:00 Next steps - intersessional work, next meeting
- 14:00 Summary, conclusions, and follow-up
- 16:00 Close of workshop