

AY 2015 Year in Review

2014

October

- 31st – The second annual Arctic Circle event is held in Reykjavik, Iceland. [The 2014 Arctic Yearbook is launched.](#)
- 22nd-23rd – US announces its priorities for its Arctic Council Chairmanship 2015-17, at a Senior Arctic Officials meeting in Yellowknife. Its overarching theme is *One Arctic: Shared Opportunities, Challenges and Responsibilities.*

November

- 17th-21st – The International Maritime Organization (IMO) adopts the International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code), and related amendments to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) to make it mandatory.
- 25th - Canadian Auditor General Michael Ferguson releases his audit of the Nutrition North report, sparking debate on the best ways to address the high rates of food insecurity in the Canadian Arctic and beyond.
- 28th – Early general elections were held in Greenland following a spending scandal. A three party coalition government, led by Kim Kielsen, was formed consisting of the incumbent Siumut and Solidarity parties alongside the Democrats.

December

- 11th – The head of the Northern Sea Route Administration, Alexander Olszewski, announces that in the year to December 1, 2014, the volume of transit cargo through the Northern Sea Route fell by 77%, from 1.176 million tons in 2013 to 274,000 tons.
- 14th – Denmark provides a submission for its Arctic Ocean extended shelf to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS), claiming just under 900,000km².

2015

January

2nd – Economic sanctions and other Russian economic woes materialize in a 30% drop in traffic, year over year, of Russian shoppers visiting the Norwegian town of Kirkenes to partake in Orthodox Christmas preparations, from 26,850 border crossings in December 2013 compared to 15,879 in December 2014.

February

20th – The Arctic Human Development Report II is published on the tenth anniversary of the first volume, with a theme of *Regional Processes and Global Linkages*.

27th – UK House of Lords Arctic Committee publish their report on *Responding to a Changing Arctic*.

March

16th-21st – Russia conducts a massive five day military exercise in its Arctic, involving 80,000 troops, 220 aircraft, 41 ships and 15 submarines.

April

12th – The Russian embassy of Canada announces that Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, would not attend the Arctic Council Ministerial in Iqaluit, due to prior commitments. Lavrov had attended every previous Arctic Council Ministerial since 2004.

23rd – 30th The *Arctic Science Summit Week 2015* and *International Conference for Arctic Research Planning*, (ICARP III) is held in Toyama, Japan. The conference statement “Integrating Arctic Research: A Roadmap for the Further” is released.

24th – The 9th Arctic Council Ministerial is held in Iqaluit, Canada. Key deliverables of the Canadian Chairmanship include an *Enhanced Framework of Black carbon and Methane Emissions*; a *Framework Plan for Cooperation on Prevention of Marine Oil Pollution*; and the establishment of an *Arctic Economic Council*.

2015

May

11th-15th – The International Maritime Organization (IMO) adopts the environmental part of the International Code for ships operating in polar waters (Polar Code) and associated MARPOL amendments to make the Code mandatory by the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC).

21st – US Secretary of State John Kerry hosts a reception in the Benjamin Franklin Room at the Department of State to celebrate its Arctic Council Chairmanship.

31st-June 7th – The 2015 Calotte Academy travels to Rovaniemi, Inari and Salla in Finland, Apatity and Murmansk in Russia, and Kirkenes in Norway.

June

1st – Canadian High Arctic Research Station Act comes into force, establishing *Polar Knowledge Canada*, a new federal research organization that combines the mandate and functions of the former Canadian Polar Commission and the Canadian High Arctic Research Station program.

1st – Digital diplomacy meets the Arctic, as the five Nordic Ambassadors to the United States host a Twitter Town Hall under the hashtag #AskNordicAmbs to discuss the US Arctic Council Chairmanship themes of climate change, stewardship of the Arctic Ocean, and improving economic and living conditions in the Arctic.

12th – Policy Options for a Changing Arctic 2015 (POCA2015). The Northern Research Forum, in collaboration with the Interuniversity Research Center on the International Relations of Canada and Québec (CIRRICQ), co-organize a full day workshop on US Arctic Policy in Montréal, Québec, Canada. Admiral Robert J. Papp, the first US Special Representative for the Arctic takes part in the days' meeting and launches the State Department's Arctic Council Chairmanship on Canadian soil.

15th – “Kayaktivists” attempt to block Shell’s drilling rig the Polar Pioneer from departing Seattle’s Elliott Bay. The Polar Pioneer is one of two drilling vessels used by Shell in its 2015 Chukchi Sea drilling expedition.

2015

July

13th – Greenpeace and designer Vivienne Westwood launch a “Save the Arctic” celebrity campaign selling designer t-shirts for \$115 to raise funds for the Amsterdam-based environmental organization.

16th – The five Arctic littoral states – Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the United States, known as the Arctic 5, sign an agreement to combat unregulated fishing in the Arctic Ocean. It prevents fishermen from their countries from fishing in the international waters of the central Arctic Ocean. The Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs subsequently called in the Arctic 5 Ambassadors to express its concern on being excluded from those negotiations.

21st – Inuvialuit sign a self-government agreement-in-principle with the governments of the Northwest Territories and Canada.

22nd – Shell receives final approval from the Obama Administration for exploratory drilling in the Chukchi Sea in 2015, after receiving preliminary approval in May.

31st – The European Union (EU) formally approves the Government of Nunavut as a Recognized Body under the Indigenous Communities Exemption of the EU Seal Regime, which means that the Government of Nunavut will be able to certify sealskins as having been harvested according to the rules of the exemption. The EU seal ban issue had previously been cited by Canada as the reason for their objection to EU Observer status at the Arctic Council.

31st – The Northwest Territory Métis Nation sign a land and resources agreement-in-principle with the governments of the Northwest Territories and Canada.

August

3rd – Russia provides a revised submission on its Arctic Ocean extended shelf to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, claiming over 1.2 million km².

8th – House Bill 1, *Alaska's Arctic Policy*, legally went into effect August 8, 2015 under Alaska Statute 44.99.105.

13th – Ambassador Mark Brzezinski is appointed Executive Director of the US Government’s Arctic Executive Steering Committee.

31st – GLACIER (Conference on Global Leadership in the Arctic: Cooperation, Innovation, Engagement and Resilience) is held in Anchorage with participation from US President Obama to build momentum for ambitious action at COP-21 (UNFCCC meeting on climate change in Paris, December 2015). Although taking place during the US Arctic Council Chairmanship, the event is not affiliated with that forum.

2015

September

2nd – The five Arctic coastal states agree to a ten year circumpolar action plan to protect and manage polar bears and their habitat.

11th – The Arctic Economic Council (AEC), founded in Iqaluit in September 2014, opens its Secretariat in Tromsø, Norway.

15th-17th – Fifth International Meeting of the Arctic Council Member States, Arctic Council Observer States and International Academic Community Representatives, organized under the auspices of the Russian Federation Security Council, takes place in Arkhangelsk, Russia.

25th – Book release: “The Barents Region – A Transnational History of Subarctic Northern Europe.” Edited by Lars Elenius et al., this is the first common history book on the European North.

28th – Royal Dutch Shell announces that it will cease exploration in Arctic waters off Alaska’s coast “for the foreseeable future.” Shell had invested upward \$7 billion on Arctic offshore development in the Chukchi and Beaufort seas over the last years.

October

1st – The European Council of the European Union adopted regulation that brings the EU ban on trade in seal products into compliance with World Trade Organization (WTO) rules.

28th (expected date as of publication) – The eight Arctic states send their heads of coast guard or equivalent official delegation to the US Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut to officially launch the Arctic Coast Guard Forum (ACGF).