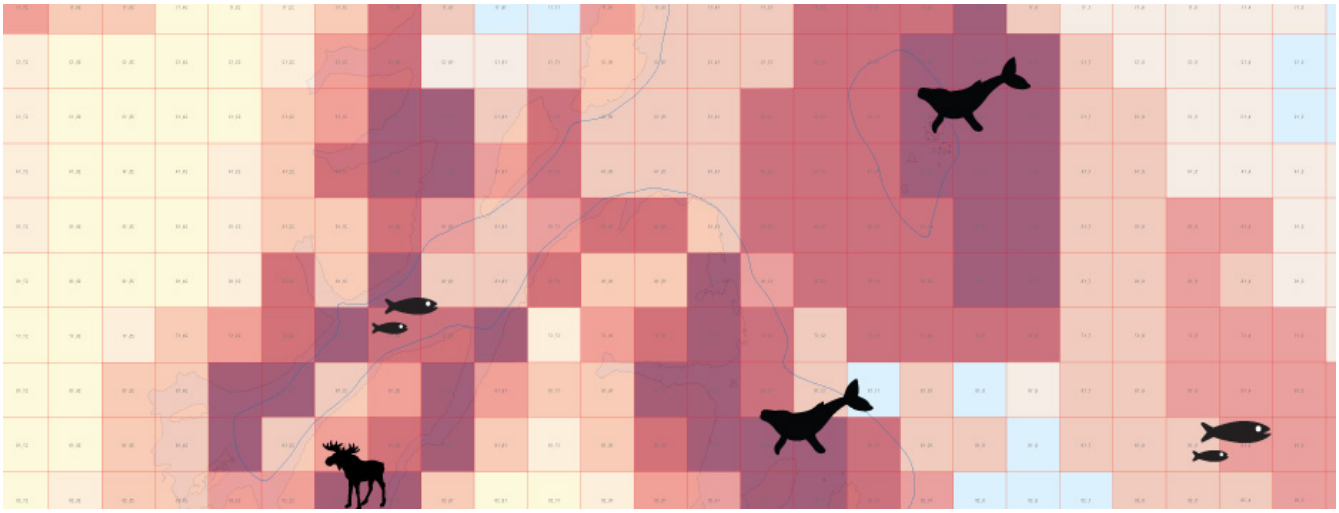
WWF FACTSHEET

Arctic Programme

INFORMING DECISIONS FOR ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC ARCTIC SUSTAINABILITY (IDEEAS)



A Vision for Stewardship and Sustainable Development in the Arctic

The Arctic is at a critical juncture with climate change and development pressures. New investments in infrastructure and industry are predicted to increase significantly in the decades to come. The climate is warming at about twice the global rate; warming that will increase in the years to come despite best efforts to address climate change. As these changes occur, it is critical that people making decisions about the Arctic's future are informed with the best science and models. Business as usual is not an option. Ill-informed decisions risk harming the environment and people who depend on it. Information on how decisions affect nature and the benefits it provides people, now and into the future, is needed to transform this trajectory, supporting sustainable development. In a sustainable future Arctic, development plans should be supported by – and benefit – local communities and natural assets. Development must not compromise peoples' access to clean air and water, nutritionally and culturally valuable food resources and important areas of local use. Development should improve the lives of people in the Arctic, and protect life-sustaining ecosystems. The value of natural assets must be part of standard accounting, economic, and financial processes.

Understanding the Arctic's Natural Assets

To achieve this vision, locally relevant, accessible knowledge systems, science, decision support tools and capacity are required. Around the world, people are developing, accessing and sharing information about natural assets. These approaches can identify what benefits nature currently provides, and look forward to what may happen to those benefits as the climate changes, and as resource management and human interactions with nature change. This is helping people understand and visualize the results of different choices. The IDEEAS project aims to harness these approaches to support an Arctic where resource management and development decisions are made with a clear understanding of the region's natural resources and how nature supports security, human health, and well-being.

A natural assets analysis can help in the Arctic to:

- Assist communities and governments in the Arctic as they co-create sustainable development policies, plans, practices, projects and investments that affect the land and water.
- Equip communities in the Arctic with knowledge needed to promote their security and wellbeing in development decisions, as they engage with companies and governments.
- Help investors decrease risk to potential investments by incorporating into planning the near- and long-term costs associated with natural hazards (such as erosion and flooding) and from climate change.
- Help all decision-makers understand the environmental and social impacts of infrastructure projects in advance of decisions on siting and design.

How it Works Elsewhere

Infrastructure siting: In Myanmar and Mozambique, government leaders are mapping benefits provided by nature to help plan development and site proposed infrastructure projects. This enables them to keep infrastructure such as roads away from areas that would undermine nature that benefits communities, and towards places that will improve people's lives.

Development planning: In China, information on how nature benefits people is being used to design restoration and protection of ecosystems across 49% of the country, accentuating critical services such as food production, water provision and flood mitigation. The government of Belize used similar information to create a national coastal plan that allows for greater equity and increased tourism revenues while also protecting and restoring ecosystems.

In Action in the Arctic

WWF and the Natural Capital Project, with support from Guggenheim Partners, have begun to create the foundations for an initiative that can achieve this vision. We are developing an Arctic Sustainability Baseline Assessment to compile an inventory of key datasets and information on natural systems and how people and wildlife interact with, and depend on, the region's diverse ecosystems. This understanding of available relevant data is an essential first step and can later be used to inform a variety of resource use and development decisions. We are also identifying key data and science providers and reaching out to potential partners. The Arctic Sustainability Baseline Assessment will be made freely available to the public in 2017.

Seeking Partners

We believe that informing decisions in the Arctic with information on nature's benefits will require the participation of many other people and organizations, both inside and outside of the Arctic. People in the Arctic can describe the Arctic future that they want – what services must be sustained for future generations? What places and ecosystems are essential for food and cultural security?

Our guiding principles for this initiative include:

- All information and tools must be free and open source.
- Taking into account the whole system. This means including all forms of knowledge, including science and traditional knowledge, to inform mapping of the Arctic's natural assets.
- Having a multi-dimensional concept of value that considers cultural, ecological, social, health and economic values. It will not boil these values down into over-simplistic monetary metrics nor encourage commodification of nature.
- Synthesizing economic and traditional knowledge with scientific knowledge, innovation and sound governance for better resource management and stewardship.
- Supplementing information on financial capital opportunities with information on the long-term natural, social and cultural priorities that are at stake.

WWF, the Natural Capital Project and Guggenheim Partners are seeking partners to co-develop an initiative that integrates diverse knowledge into sustainable development decisions, in the face of climate-driven changes in the Arctic. Specifically, we seek to identify the cultural, ecological, social, health and economic values of biodiversity and ecosystems to people, institutions and governments in the Arctic, working together with a broad group of partners to develop data sets, publications and decision making tools that further a collective commitment to support sustainable development.

WWF

Why we are here
To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

panda.org/arctic

We invite questions, ideas, input, and your participation!

Please share with Emily McKenzie: ejmckenzie@wwf.org.uk

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