

# The Beaufort Sea

Planning for Conservation and Responsible Development



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**Global warming and industrial development will dramatically influence this region. Now is the time to bring together scientific and traditional knowledge to map out the Beaufort ecosystem for its future health and sustainable use.**

The Beaufort Sea stretches across the northern coasts of Alaska, Yukon and the western Northwest Territories. It is rich in fish, birds and marine mammals such as beluga, bowhead whale, walrus and polar bear. Today it continues to support the livelihood and culture of the Inupiat, Inuvialuit and Gwich'in peoples.

The Beaufort Sea is also rich in oil and gas deposits. As global warming reduces sea ice, these resources are becoming more and more accessible. Now, the rush is on to develop them. The Canadian and US governments have already issued more than 50 exploration and discovery licenses in the Beaufort Sea.

## The need for good planning

Managing the Beaufort Sea well means taking into account many uses. Governments need to consider economic development, resource extraction and hunting and fishing. They also need to conserve wildlife and sensitive areas. Development can bring

many benefits if it is done right. However, it takes good planning to maximize opportunities while minimizing risks and conflicts.

Today, decisions are being made that will have far-reaching impacts on the people, wildlife and ecosystems of this region. This creates an exciting and urgent opportunity for governments, local communities, and other stakeholders to work together. Through collaboration, we can protect the health of this shared ecosystem before major industrial development goes ahead.

## Working across borders

The Beaufort Sea ecosystem straddles the waters of the US and Canada, making ecosystem stewardship a shared responsibility. The good news is that both countries recognize the need for good marine management in the Arctic.

In the U.S., President Obama announced the *National Policy for the Stewardship of Oceans, Coasts, and the Great Lakes* in

*“WWF supports and encourages good stewardship in the Arctic, with careful planning to ensure that local priorities and concerns are met and particularly sensitive areas are identified and adequately protected.”*

Martin von Mirbach,  
Arctic Program Director,  
WWF-Canada

**Spatial planning** brings together everyone with a stake in the Beaufort Sea. The aim is to understand the ecosystem and map current and future human activities in order to meet the ecological, economic and social needs of the people and the environment.

July 2010. At the heart of this new policy is a framework for recognizing the special features and needs of Arctic ecosystems.

In Canada, the federal Fisheries and Oceans Minister has accepted the *Integrated Oceans Management Plan*. This plan was produced by the Beaufort Sea Partnership, a group that includes federal and territorial departments, Indigenous organizations, industry, academics, and conservation groups, including WWF. Now the Partnership is working to implement it.

However, the Beaufort Sea is a single ecosystem. To manage it effectively, we need to share information and harmonize plans across borders — and communities have a key role to play.

### What WWF is doing

Good planning can't happen without input and support from local communities. Through our Global Arctic Programme,

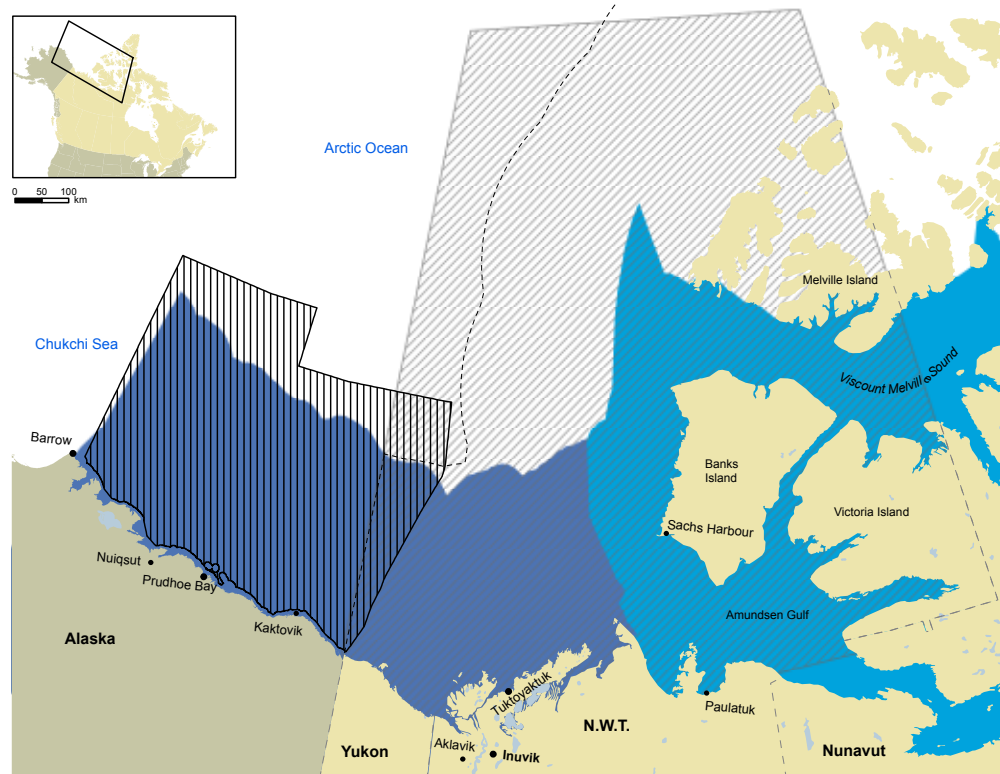
WWF's staff in Alaska and Inuvik are supporting community-driven conservation planning in the Beaufort Sea. We're supporting Inupiat and Inuvialuit to work together to:

- encourage dialogue and share knowledge across borders
- understand the state of scientific and traditional knowledge of the ecosystem
- identify risks to the shared ecosystem, such as oil spills
- identify opportunities for future collaboration

Our long-term goal is to promote spatial planning that protects ecological and cultural values on both sides of the border. By helping governments make good management decisions now, we can have an impact for generations to come — and set an example for marine stewardship across the circumpolar Arctic.

### Beaufort Sea Boundaries of Interest

- Exclusive Economic Zone
- Canada
- United States of America
- Beaufort Large Ocean Management Area
- Alaska Planning Units: Beaufort Sea
- Marine Ecoregions: Continental Coast & Shelf
- Marine Ecoregions: Beaufort – Amundsen – Viscount Melville – Queen Maud



	<p><b>Why we are here.</b> We are creating solutions to the most serious conservation challenges facing our planet, helping people and nature thrive.</p>
	<p>wwf.ca</p>

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