

112TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2147

To provide for research, monitoring, and observation of the Arctic Ocean
and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 1, 2012

Mr. BEGICH introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred
to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To provide for research, monitoring, and observation of the
Arctic Ocean and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Arctic Ocean Research,
5 Monitoring, and Observing Act of 2012”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-
8 ings:

9 (1) The United States is an Arctic Nation
10 with—

1 (A) an approximately 700-mile border with
2 the Arctic Ocean;

3 (B) more than 100,000,000 acres of land
4 above the Arctic Circle; and

5 (C) an even broader area defined as Arctic
6 by temperature, which includes the Bering Sea
7 and Aleutian Islands.

8 (2) The Arctic region of the United States is
9 home to an indigenous population that has subsisted
10 for millennia on the abundance in marine mammals,
11 fish, and wildlife, many of which are unique to the
12 region.

13 (3) Temperatures in the United States Arctic
14 region have warmed by 3 to 4 degrees Celsius over
15 the past half-century, a rate of increase that is twice
16 the global average.

17 (4) The Arctic ice pack is rapidly diminishing
18 and thinning, and the National Oceanic and Atmos-
19 pheric Administration estimates the Arctic Ocean
20 may be ice free during summer months in as few as
21 30 years.

22 (5) Such changes to the Arctic region are hav-
23 ing a significant impact on the indigenous people of
24 the Arctic, their communities and ecosystems, as

1 well as the marine mammals, fish, and wildlife upon
2 which they depend.

3 (6) Such changes are opening new portions of
4 the United States Arctic continental shelf to possible
5 development for offshore oil and gas, commercial
6 fishing, marine shipping, and tourism.

7 (7) Existing Federal research and science advi-
8 sory programs focused on the environmental and so-
9 cioeconomic impacts of a changing Arctic Ocean lack
10 a cohesive, coordinated, and integrated approach and
11 are not adequately coordinated with State, local,
12 academic, and private-sector Arctic Ocean research
13 programs.

14 (8) The lack of research integration and syn-
15 thesis of findings of Arctic Ocean research has im-
16 peded the progress of the United States and inter-
17 national community in understanding climate change
18 impacts and feedback mechanisms in the Arctic
19 Ocean.

20 (9) An improved scientific understanding of the
21 changing Arctic Ocean is critical to the development
22 of appropriate and effective regional, national, and
23 global climate change adaptation strategies.

24 (b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to estab-
25 lish a permanent environmental sentinel program to con-

1 duct research, monitoring, and observation activities in the
2 Arctic Ocean—

3 (1) to promote and sustain a productive and re-
4 silient marine, coastal, and estuarine ecosystem in
5 the Arctic and the human uses of its natural re-
6 sources through greater understanding of how the
7 ecosystem works and monitoring and observation of
8 its vital signs; and

9 (2) to track and evaluate the effectiveness of
10 natural resource management in the Arctic in order
11 to facilitate improved performance and adaptive
12 management.

13 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

14 In this Act:

15 (1) **BOARD.**—The term “Board” means the
16 North Pacific Research Board established under sec-
17 tion 401(e) of the Department of the Interior and
18 Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1998 (Public
19 Law 105–1608).

20 (2) **COMMISSION.**—The term “Commission”
21 means the Arctic Research Commission established
22 under the Arctic Research and Policy Act of 1984
23 (Public Law 98–373; 15 U.S.C. 4102).

1 (3) PROGRAM.—The term “Program” means
2 the Arctic Ocean Research, Monitoring, and Obser-
3 vation Program established by section 4(a).

4 **SEC. 4. ARCTIC OCEAN RESEARCH, MONITORING, AND OB-**
5 **SERVATION PROGRAM.**

6 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established an Arctic
7 Ocean Research, Monitoring, and Observation Program to
8 be administered by the Board with input and assistance
9 from the Commission.

10 (b) RESEARCH, MONITORING, AND OBSERVATION
11 ACTIVITIES.—The Program shall be an integrated, long-
12 term scientific research, monitoring, and observation pro-
13 gram consisting of—

14 (1) marine, coastal, and estuarine research, in-
15 cluding—

16 (A) fisheries research;

17 (B) research on the structure and function
18 of the ecosystem and its food webs; and

19 (C) research on the spatial distributions
20 and status of fish, wildlife, and other popu-
21 lations in the Arctic;

22 (2) marine, coastal, and estuarine ecosystem
23 monitoring and observation, including expansion of
24 the Alaska Ocean Observing System in the Arctic;
25 and

1 (3) marine, coastal, and estuarine research,
2 monitoring, observation, and modeling that supports
3 planning, environmental review, decisionmaking,
4 evaluation, impact and natural resources damage as-
5 sessment, and adaptive management with respect to
6 industrial and other human activities, such as ship-
7 ping, in the Arctic, environmental change, and their
8 interactive and cumulative effects in the Arctic.

9 (c) INITIAL PROJECTS.—In initiating the Program,
10 the Board shall make grants under subsection (e)—

11 (1) to support research and monitoring of Arc-
12 tic fisheries, including on the distributions and ecol-
13 ogy of Arctic cod and other forage fishes, for a pe-
14 riod of not less than 3 years;

15 (2) to support research and monitoring of Arc-
16 tic marine mammals, including their responses to
17 loss of sea ice habitats and reactions to disturbance,
18 for a period of not less than 3 years; and

19 (3) to establish the Alaska Ocean Observing
20 System in the Arctic Ocean such that it has suffi-
21 cient capacity to provide comprehensive data,
22 nowcasts and forecasts, and information products in
23 real time and near real time on physical, chemical,
24 and biological conditions and environmental change.

25 (d) ARCTIC OCEAN SCIENCE PLAN.—

1 (1) REQUIREMENT.—The Board and the Com-
2 mission shall jointly prepare a comprehensive, inte-
3 grated Arctic Ocean science plan.

4 (2) RECOGNITION AND COORDINATION WITH
5 OTHER SCIENCE.—The content of the plan required
6 by paragraph (1) shall be developed with recognition
7 of and in coordination with other science plans and
8 activities in the Arctic.

9 (3) INFORMED BY SYNTHESIS OF EXISTING
10 KNOWLEDGE.—Development of the plan required by
11 paragraph (1) shall be informed by a synthesis of
12 existing knowledge about the Arctic ecosystem, in-
13 cluding information about how the ecosystem func-
14 tions, individual and cumulative sources of eco-
15 system stress, how the ecosystem is changing, and
16 other relevant information.

17 (4) REVIEW.—

18 (A) INITIAL REVIEW BY NATIONAL RE-
19 SEARCH COUNCIL.—The Board shall submit the
20 initial plan required by paragraph (1) to the
21 National Research Council for review.

22 (B) PERIODIC REVIEW AND UPDATES.—
23 Not less frequently than once every 5 years
24 thereafter, the Board and the Commission shall,
25 in consultation with the National Research

1 Council, review the plan required by paragraph
2 (1) and update it as the Board and the Com-
3 mission consider necessary.

4 (5) USE.—The Board shall use the plan re-
5 quired by paragraph (1) as a basis for setting prior-
6 ities and awarding grants under subsection (e).

7 (e) GRANTS.—

8 (1) AUTHORITY.—Except as provided in para-
9 graph (2), the Board shall, under the Program,
10 award grants to carry out research, monitoring, and
11 observation activities described in subsections (b)
12 and (c).

13 (2) LIMITATION.—The North Pacific Research
14 Board may not award any grants under paragraph
15 (1) until the Board has prepared the plan required
16 by subsection (d)(1).

17 (3) CONDITIONS, CONSIDERATIONS, AND PRIOR-
18 ITIES.—When making grants to carry out the re-
19 search, monitoring, and observation activities de-
20 scribed in subsections (b) and (c), the Board shall—

21 (A) consider institutions located in the
22 Arctic and subarctic;

23 (B) place a priority on cooperative, inte-
24 grated long-term projects, designed to address

1 current or anticipated marine ecosystem or fish-
2 ery or wildlife management information needs;

3 (C) give priority to fully establishing and
4 operating the Alaska Ocean Observing System
5 in the Arctic Ocean, which may include future
6 support for cabled ocean observatories;

7 (D) recognize the value of local and tradi-
8 tional ecological knowledge, and, where appro-
9 priate, place a priority on research, monitoring,
10 and observation projects that incorporate local
11 and traditional ecological knowledge;

12 (E) ensure that research, monitoring, and
13 observation data collected by grantees of the
14 Program are made available to the public in a
15 timely fashion, pursuant to national and inter-
16 national protocols; and

17 (F) give due consideration to the annual
18 recommendations and review of the Commission
19 carried out under subsection (f).

20 (f) ANNUAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND REVIEW BY
21 ARCTIC RESEARCH COMMISSION.—Each year, the Com-
22 mission shall—

23 (1) recommend ongoing and future research,
24 monitoring, and observation priorities and strategies

1 to be carried out pursuant to subsections (b) and
2 (c);

3 (2) undertake a written review of ongoing and
4 recently concluded research, monitoring, and obser-
5 vation activities undertaken pursuant to such sub-
6 sections; and

7 (3) submit to the Board the recommendations
8 required by paragraph (1) and the review required
9 by paragraph (2).

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