

Actions for Arctic Biodiversity

April 2017

Progress Report



ARCTIC COUNCIL

Actions for Arctic Biodiversity, 2013-2021

Biennial progress report

Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Methods:	1
3. Results	2

1. Introduction

The *Actions for Arctic Biodiversity, 2013-21* (Action Plan) comprises the implementation plan for the ABA recommendations. It is a living document that is reviewed and updated every two years. The plan is not meant to be exhaustive or to replace working group work plans; rather it is complimentary, emphasizing specific actions that address ABA recommendations.

The Action Plan is organized in two-year implementation periods, corresponding to the cycle of rotation of the chairmanship of the Arctic Council. Each period finishes at a Ministerial Meeting where the focus and deliverables for the next phase are reviewed. This delineation of phases was selected to assist with aligning priorities, resource allocation, and reporting within the Arctic Council.

Regular progress reports are prepared to guide adjustments in the suite of implementation actions over the lifetime of the plan to achieve greater impact, meet new challenges, and take advantage of opportunities that arise. Priorities identified in previous phases will continue to be acted upon where relevant and new actions will be added based on strategies and plans developed in previous implementation periods. The reporting framework includes:

- **Annual reports:** on progress towards implementation of the Action Plan;
- **Biennial reports:** a more in-depth evaluation every second year to review progress and guide revisions as necessary for the following two-year period;
- **Final report:** which will include recommendations for follow-up, to be delivered for the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in 2021.

2. Methods:

The following framework and metrics were used to evaluate progress from 2013-17:

Performance indicators	Metrics
<i>Effectiveness:</i> Are the tasks in the Action Plan being implemented, resulting in concrete steps towards achievement of ABA recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status of tasks identified in the Action Plan: Ongoing; Completed; Planned not started 2013-17; Planned 2017-19; and Planned 2019-21.
<i>Engagement:</i> Has the Action Plan resulted in increased engagement of relevant stakeholders in implementation of ABA recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers of new initiatives between Arctic Council subsidiary bodies working on tasks identified in the Action Plan. • Numbers of Observer states; organisations; and expert organisations engaged in tasks identified in the Action Plan.
<i>Dissemination:</i> Has the <i>Action Plan</i> resulted in increased awareness of and access to information on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of visitors to CAFF.is • Numbers of data records accessible

Arctic biodiversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers and attendance of outreach events • Social media engagement • Numbers of new partners on initiatives
<p><i>Impact:</i> It lies outside the scope of this biennial report to assess the impact of the Action Plan. However, examples will be provided of outcomes achieved through the implementation of the Action Plan.</p>	

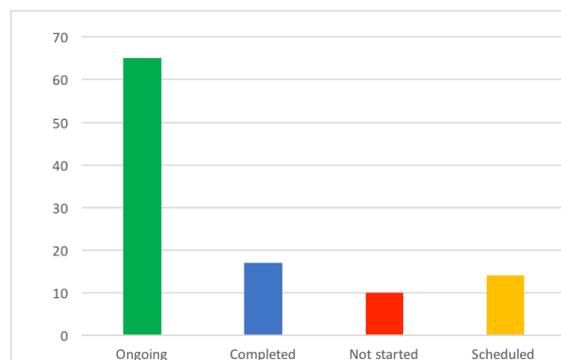
3. Results

There has been significant progress towards implementation of ABA recommendations. Progress achieved reflects how the ABA and the Actions Plan has provided clarity on issues affecting Arctic biodiversity and sharpened focus on how the Arctic Council should respond.

Effectiveness

The *Actions Plan* contains 107¹ actions, and of these:

- 17 have been completed (blue);
- 65 have been initiated and are ongoing (green);
- 10 planned for 2013-17 have not started (red); and
- 14 are scheduled for 2017-21 (yellow).



Fifty-eight of the 75 tasks completed or initiated in 2013-17 were led by CAFF.

Failure to initiate tasks was due to one or more of the following factors:

- 1) no leads;
- 2) lack of funding; and/or
- 3) changing priorities.

All of the tasks scheduled for 2013-17 and led by other Working Groups or Task Forces were either initiated or completed.

See Annex 1 for further details on status of task implementation

Engagement

The reporting and evaluation component built into the Action Plan has facilitated engagement of Arctic Council bodies in reporting on ABA implementation. A workshop on ABA implementation was held (Oct. 2016) with all WG Chairs and Executive Secretaries and each WG¹ has participated in the reporting process.

This increasing engagement can also be seen in the growing number of cross-cutting initiatives between Arctic Council bodies working on tasks identified in the *Action Plan*. Thirty tasks in the 2013-17 period entailed involvement of more than one Arctic Council body.

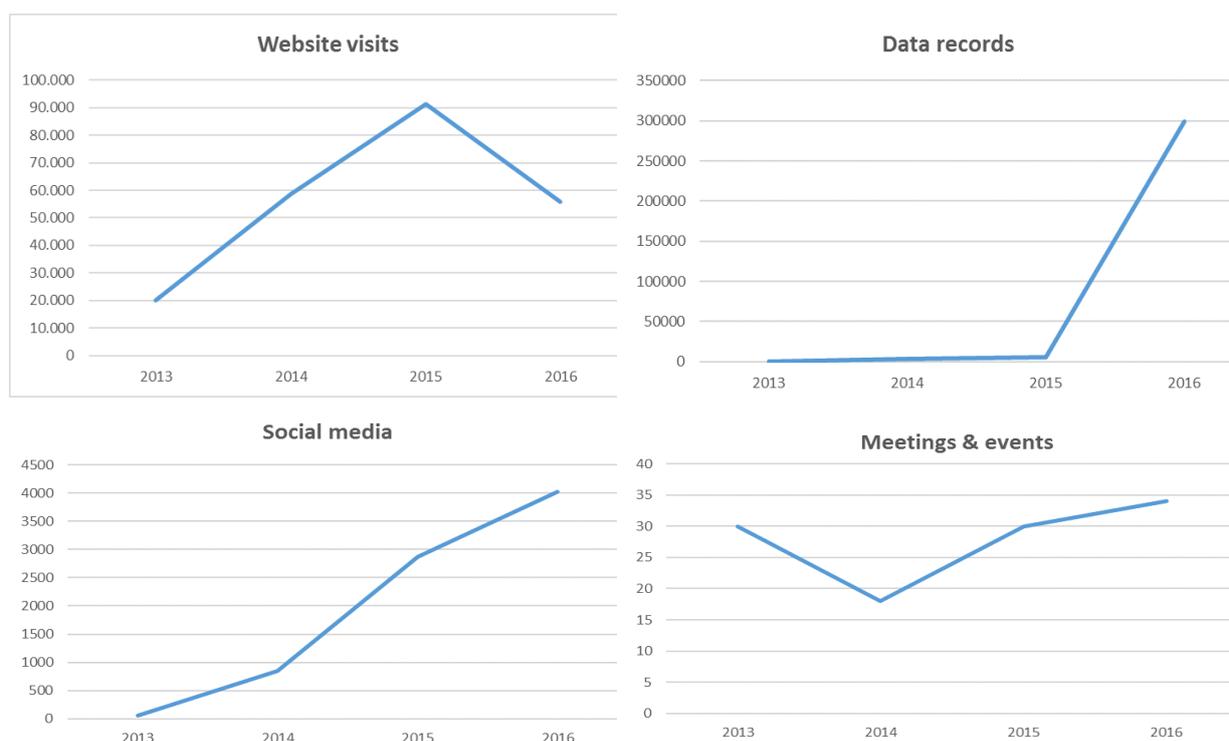
¹ As of Dec. 20 AMAP has not yet provided their input to this report, once this information has been received these figures will be revised accordingly

Cross-cutting tasks focused initially on technical issues, e.g., as in the pooling of expertise to identify *areas of heightened sensitivity to shipping* (AMAP, CAFF, SDWG 2013). However, it has evolved to include policy orientated activities, such as the CAFF and PAME work on the development of an *Arctic Invasive Species Strategy and Action Plan (ARIAS)*. During the 2017-19 period it can be expected that such cross-cutting work will continue and evolve to focus on facilitating implementation and follow-up of individual initiatives, e.g., CAFF contributions to the *Arctic Marine Protected Areas Framework* (PAME 2015) and implementation of the ARIAS.

The numbers of organisations and non-Arctic states engaged in tasks identified in the *Action Plan* has grown significantly since 2013. For example, in the Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative (AMBI) over 19 non-Arctic states and over 19 organisations have been engaged, ranging from attending meetings, hosting meetings, sitting on project flyway committees, exchanging letters, and providing resources. This reflects an understanding that implementation of the some of the ABA recommendations also require action by non-Arctic states, stakeholders, and international organizations.

Dissemination

Increased awareness of and access to information on Arctic biodiversity can be seen in the growth in visits to CAFF websites, social media followers and numbers of events.



The dip in numbers of website visits and events in 2014 reflects the focus on the first Arctic Biodiversity Congress (Dec. 2014), and does not detract from the overall trend of increased dissemination. The dramatic increase in numbers of biodiversity data records available from 2015 reflects the increasing capacity of the Arctic Biodiversity Data Service (ABDS) to facilitate access to and archiving of biodiversity information.

Impact

It lies outside the scope of this biennial report to assess the impact of the Action Plan. However, examples where outcomes achieved through the Action Plan can be seen include in how:

- As part of its implementation of the ABA recommendations Greenland has selected specific recommendations of most relevance for Greenland to follow up on.
- The Environment Ministers of the Nordic conducted a review of Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) activities in order to consider how best to support follow-up on the ABA. This concluded that the NCM is conducting projects of relevance to all 17 of the ABA recommendations (25 focused on biodiversity and ecosystems; three on health and hazardous substances; and three on climate change and pollution). This review will inform further discussions within the NCM as to how they support follow-up on the ABA recommendations; and
- Cooperation between states engaged in the implementation of CAFF's Circumpolar Marine Biodiversity Monitoring Plan led to the identification amongst Atlantic Arctic nations of time- and cost-effective possibilities for marine benthos monitoring. This resulted in an initiative to add a benthic component to the annual monitoring of commercial fish-stocks by states, leading to much better biodiversity monitoring coverage in both geography and taxonomy with little extra cost and thereby adding value to existing endeavours.
- AMBI has been an excellent tool to engage cooperation on Arctic biodiversity actions, leading to a series of high level communique between the Arctic Council Senior Arctic Official and Arctic ambassadors/lead diplomats on the issue of migratory bird conservation, thus raising this topic beyond Arctic nations to 14 countries and growing, resulting in active observer engagement and support.

Annex 1: Effectiveness



Text within task item boxes refers to task item number in the Actions for Arctic Biodiversity 2013-2021

Recommendations	Implementation actions
#A: Implementation plan for ABA recommendations (Actions for Arctic Biodiversity)	A.a Ongoing, A.b Ongoing, A.c Planned 2019-21, A.d Ongoing
#B: Convene Arctic Biodiversity Congress.	B.a Completed, B.b Ongoing, B.c Planned 2019-21
#C: Continue to improve and make available information and data.	C.a Ongoing, C.b Ongoing, C.c Ongoing, C.d Ongoing
#1: Actively support international efforts addressing climate change; both reducing stressors and implementing adaptation measures, as an urgent matter	1.1a Ongoing, 1.1b Ongoing, 1.1c Completed, 1.1d Completed, 1.1e Completed, 1.1f Ongoing, 1.2 Ongoing
#2: Incorporate resilience and adaptation of biodiversity to climate change into plans for development in the Arctic.	2.1 Completed, 2.2 Ongoing, 2.3 Ongoing, 2.4 Ongoing, 2.5 Ongoing, 2.6 New project
#3: Advance and advocate ecosystem-based management efforts in the Arctic as a framework for cooperation, planning and development.	3.1 Ongoing, 3.2 Ongoing, 3.3 Ongoing, 3.4 Completed, 3.5 Ongoing, 3.6 Planned 2017-19, 3.7 New project
#4: Require the incorporation of biodiversity objectives and provisions into all Arctic Council work and encourage the same for ongoing and future international standards, agreements, plans, operations and/or other tools specific to development in the Arctic. This should include, but not be restricted to, oil and gas development, shipping, fishing, tourism and mining.	4.1 Ongoing, 4.2 Completed, 4.3 Ongoing, 4.4 Planned 2017-19, 4.5 Ongoing, 4.6 Ongoing, 4.7 Ongoing, 4.8 Ongoing
#5: Advance the protection of large areas of ecologically important marine, terrestrial and freshwater habitats, taking into account ecological resilience in a changing climate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Build upon existing and ongoing domestic and international processes to complete the identification of ecologically and biologically important marine areas and implement appropriate measures for their conservation; and b) Build upon existing networks of terrestrial protected areas, filling geographic gaps, including under-represented areas, rare or unique habitats, particularly productive areas such as large river deltas, biodiversity hotspots, and areas with large aggregations of animals such as bird breeding colonies, seal whelping areas and caribou calving grounds. 	5.1 Completed, 5.2 Ongoing, 5.3 Ongoing, 5.4 Planned 2017-19, 5.5 Planned not started 2013-17

Recommendations	Implementation actions
<p>c) Promote the active involvement of indigenous peoples in the management and sustainable use of protected areas.</p>	
<p>#6: Develop guidelines and implement appropriate spatial and temporal measures where necessary to reduce human disturbance to areas critical for sensitive life stages of Arctic species that are outside protected areas, for example along transportation corridors. Such areas include calving grounds, den sites, feeding grounds, migration routes and moulting areas. This also means safeguarding important habitats such as wetlands and polynyas.</p>	<p>6.1 6.2</p>
<p>#7. Develop and implement mechanisms that best safeguard Arctic biodiversity under changing environmental conditions, such as loss of sea ice, glaciers and permafrost.</p> <p>a) Safeguard areas in the northern parts of the Arctic where high Arctic species have a relatively greater chance to survive for climatic or geographical reasons, such as certain islands and mountainous areas, which can act as a refuge for unique biodiversity.</p> <p>b) Maintain functional connectivity within and between protected areas in order to protect ecosystem resilience and facilitate adaptation to climate change.</p>	<p>7.1 7.2 7.3</p>
<p>#8: Reduce stressors on migratory species range-wide, including habitat degradation and overharvesting on wintering and staging areas and along flyways and other migration routes.</p> <p>a) Pursue or strengthen formal migratory bird cooperation agreements and other specific actions on a flyway level between Arctic and non-Arctic states with first priority given to the East Asian flyway.</p> <p>b) Collaborate with relevant international commissions, conventions, networks and other organizations sharing an interest in the conservation of Arctic migratory species to identify and implement appropriate conservation actions.</p> <p>c) Develop and implement joint management and recovery plans for threatened species with relevant non-Arctic states and entities</p> <p>d) Identify and advance the conservation of key wintering and staging habitats for migratory birds, particularly wetlands.</p>	<p>8.1 8.2 8.3 8.4 8.5 8.6</p>
<p>#9: Reduce the threat of invasive alien/non-native species to the Arctic by developing and implementing common measures for early detection and reporting, identifying and blocking pathways of introduction, and sharing best practices and techniques for monitoring, eradication and control. This includes supporting international efforts currently underway, for example those of the International Maritime Organization to effectively treat ballast water to clean and treat ship hulls and drilling rigs.</p>	<p>9.1 9.2</p>

Recommendations	Implementation actions
<p>#10: Promote the sustainable management of the Arctic’s living resources and their habitat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Improve circumpolar cooperation in data gathering and assessment of populations and harvest and in the development of improved harvest methods, planning, and management. This includes improving the use and integration of traditional ecological knowledge and science in managing harvests and in improving the development and use of community based monitoring as an important information source. b) Develop pan-Arctic conservation and management plans for shared species that are, or will potentially be, harvested or commercially exploited that incorporate common monitoring objectives, population assessments, harvesting regimes, guidelines for best practices in harvest methodology and consider maintenance of genetic viability and adaptation to climate change as guiding principles. c) Support efforts to plan and manage commercial fisheries in international waters under common international objectives that ensure long-term sustainability of species and ecosystems. Encourage precautionary, science-based management of fisheries in areas beyond national jurisdiction in accordance with international law to ensure the long-term sustainability of species and ecosystems. d) Support efforts to develop, improve and employ fishing technologies and practices that reduce by-catch of marine mammals, seabirds and non-target fish and avoid significant adverse impact to the seabed. e) Develop and implement, in cooperation with reindeer herders, management plans that ensure the sustainability of reindeer herding and the quality of habitat for grazing and calving. 	
<p>#11: Reduce the threat of pollutants to Arctic biodiversity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Support and enhance international efforts and cooperation to identify, assess and reduce existing and emerging harmful contaminants. b) Support the development of appropriate prevention and clean up measures and technologies that are responsive to oil spills in the Arctic, especially in ice-filled waters, such that they are ready for implementation in advance of major oil and gas developments. c) Encourage local and national action to implement best practices for local wastes, enhance efforts to clean up legacy contaminated sites and include contaminant reduction and reclamation plans in development projects. 	

Recommendations	Implementation actions
<p>#12: Evaluate the range of services provided by Arctic biodiversity in order to determine the costs associated with biodiversity loss and the value of effective conservation in order to assess change and support improved decision making.</p>	<p>12.1 12.2 12.3 12.4</p>
<p>#13: Increase and focus inventory, long-term monitoring and research efforts to address key gaps in scientific knowledge identified in this assessment to better facilitate the development and implementation of conservation and management strategies. Areas of particular concern identified through the ABA include components critical to ecosystem functions including important characteristics of invertebrates, microbes, parasites and pathogens.</p>	<p>13.1 13.2 13.3 13.4 13.5 13.6 13.7 13.8</p>
<p>#14: Recognize the value of traditional ecological knowledge and work to further integrate it into the assessment, planning and management of Arctic biodiversity. This includes involving Arctic peoples and their knowledge in the survey, monitoring and analysis of Arctic biodiversity.</p>	<p>14.1 14.2 14.3 14.4a 14.5 14.6 14.7</p>
<p>#15: Promote public training, education and community-based monitoring, where appropriate, as integral elements in conservation and management.</p>	<p>15.1 15.2 15.3 15.4 15.5</p>
<p>#16: Research and monitor individual and cumulative effects of stressors and drivers of relevance to biodiversity, with a focus on stressors that are expected to have rapid and significant impacts and issues where knowledge is lacking. This should include, but not be limited to; modelling potential future species range changes as a result of these stressors; developing knowledge of and identifying tipping points, thresholds and cumulative effects for Arctic biodiversity; and developing robust quantitative indicators for stressors through the CBMP.</p>	<p>16.1 16.2 16.3 16.4 16.5 16.6 16.7 16.8</p>
<p>#17: Develop communication and outreach tools and methodologies to better convey the importance and value of Arctic biodiversity and the changes it is undergoing.</p>	<p>17.1 17.2 17.3 17.4</p>