

## Advancing High Arctic Basin Marine Protection

The Government of Canada has committed to protecting a portion of the Canadian High Arctic that is projected to retain multi-year ice in the future and potentially provide important refuge for ice-dependent and culturally significant species in the Arctic. Protecting this area will also help the Government fulfill its commitments to increasing coastal and marine protection to 10% by 2020.

### Importance of the High Arctic Basin

Fisheries and Oceans Canada has identified an Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area in the Arctic Basin (Figure 1), which highlights the importance of the area but offers no protection. This area is considered globally, nationally and regionally unique due to the presence of multi-year pack ice. While relatively little is known about the area, it is believed to be critically important habitat that could provide a safe haven for Arctic under-ice communities as well as ice dependent species (e.g. polar bears and seals).

A portion of this area has also been identified as a candidate National Marine Conservation Area by Parks Canada Agency. In addition to ongoing efforts within the land claim areas, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Parks Canada Agency are now looking to advance protection measures for this high arctic multi-year pack ice called the '**High Arctic Basin**'. Protection actions are directed towards the High Arctic Basin because of the ecological significance of the area, stakeholder and partner interests as well as the potential risks from anticipated increases in Arctic shipping. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/conservation/higharctic-hautarctique/index-eng.html>.

A Fisheries and Oceans Canada science program is underway in the area to collect information on changing sea ice patterns, the sea ice environment, Arctic wildlife and biodiversity, pollutants and emissions, and more. This new information will help inform potential future protection measures. More information on this science program can be found at: <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/atsea-enmer/missions/2018/higharctic-hautarctique-eng.html>.

### Tools for marine conservation

Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Parks Canada Agency and Environment and Climate Change Canada are the federal departments with tools which support marine conservation. A map of existing marine conservation areas can be found at: <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/maps-cartes/conservation-eng.html>.



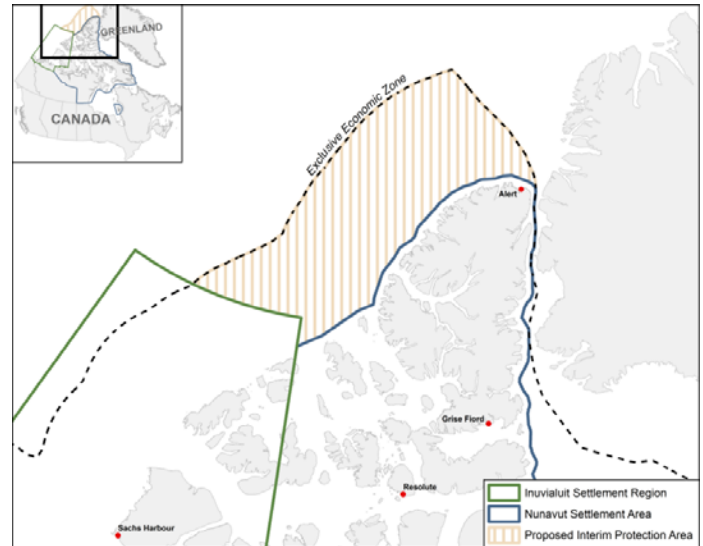
Figure 1. Arctic Basin Multi-Year Pack Ice Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area

## A phased approach to protection of the High Arctic Basin

### Phase 1 – Explore Option for Interim Protection (Figure 2)

With decreasing sea ice cover in the Arctic, there is an increased interest in marine shipping in the High Arctic. Interim protection may provide protection against potential increased shipping and confirm Canada's interest in the protection of this important area.

The proposed amendments to the *Oceans Act* may provide a new 'interim' option for marine protection. This would temporarily secure an area of interest outside of land claim areas, providing more time to collect additional information and seek support and determine area of interest for long-term protection of the High Arctic Basin.

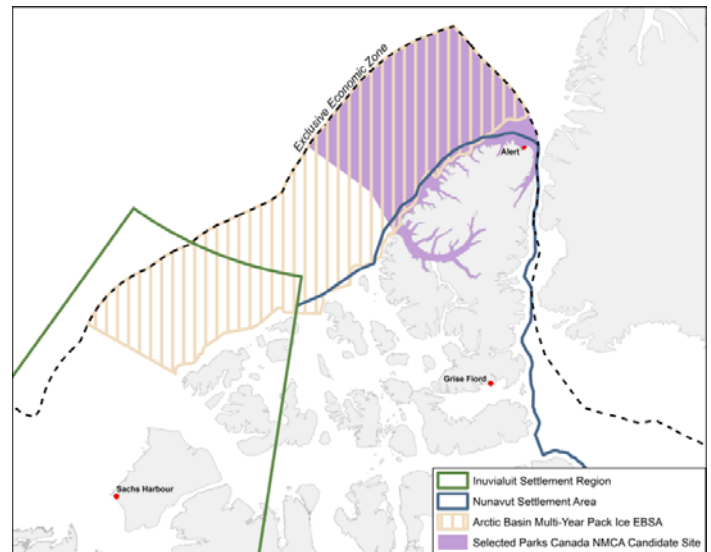


**Figure 2. Scope of area for consideration in Phase 1 – Explore option for Interim Protection**

### Phase 2 – Consider long-term protection options (Figure 3)

Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Parks Canada Agency believe that long term protection is imperative to conserving this important area and will consult with and seek support for long-term protection measures from key stakeholders and partners.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Parks Canada Agency will work with our partners to explore the scope and scale of potential protection and determine appropriate conservation tools. New information collected in Phase 1 will be used to inform protection needs.



**Figure 3. Potential areas to consider for long-term protection options**

### Phase 3 – Implementation

Implementation of long-term marine protection measures will depend on support from our partners, resources and capacity, and the consideration of new information.

## Getting In-Touch

DFO and PCA will continue engaging northern partners and stakeholders on this initiative. We invite you to send us your feedback and/or seek additional information by contacting Leah Brown at: [leah.brown@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:leah.brown@dfo-mpo.gc.ca) or by phone at 204-984-6276.