

Science Plan Released for the Navy's Submarine Arctic Science Program

Arlington, VA, July 15, 2010-A new science plan for the Arctic Ocean, which takes advantage of the unique observing and data-collection capabilities of the U.S. Navy's nuclear-powered submarines, has been released by the Interagency and Science Advisory Committees of the Submarine Arctic Science Cruises Program better known as the SCIENCE ICe EXercises (SCICEX) Program.

This 76-page plan, titled "Part 1: Technical Guidance for Planning Science Accommodations Missions," has been published on the website of the U.S. Arctic Research Commission (www.arctic.gov/publications/scicex_plan.pdf) and paper copies are available upon request. Part 2 of the plan, currently under development, will outline the management of SCICEX data and scientific community access.

The plan provides the U.S. Navy with a detailed and prioritized list of sampling recommendations to measure sea ice thickness (i.e., draft profiling), ocean hydrography and bathymetry (i.e., water depth), and to measure and sample ocean biology and chemistry. The ultimate goal of collecting this information is to increase the scientific knowledge and understanding of the Arctic Ocean region.

The Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee, Ms. Jackie Richter-Menge, of the U.S. Army's Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory, noted, "Past SCICEX cruises provided critically important data that have helped us monitor the Arctic Ocean and understand its complex changes. These data include the first and most definitive evidence of a thinning sea ice cover, and significant contributions to the best publicly available map of the Arctic Ocean, the International Bathymetric Chart of the Arctic Ocean (www.ngdc.noaa.gov/mgg/bathymetry/arctic/). This plan will enable the continued strategic use of submarines as part of the Arctic Observing Network."

The Scientific Advisory Committee will periodically review the plan, and will update it based on advances in knowledge and technology. The plan was approved and endorsed by the SCICEX Interagency Committee which is chaired by the Office of Naval Research, and includes representatives from the Navy's Arctic Submarine Laboratory, and the Chief of Naval Operations, as well as the National Science Foundation, and the U.S. Arctic Research Commission.

Mr. George Newton, a former Navy Captain and a submariner, as well as a former Chair of the USARC, said, "The Arctic Ocean is the most poorly understood ocean on Earth, and I'm glad to see Arctic research supported by the unique synoptic data collection capabilities of a nuclear submarine operating under the sea ice."

The Arctic Research and Policy Act of 1984 established the U.S. Arctic Research Commission. Its principal duties are to develop and recommend an integrated national Arctic research policy and assist in establishing a national Arctic research program plan to implement the policy. Commissioners also facilitate cooperation between the federal government, state and local governments, and other nations with respect to Arctic research, both basic and applied.

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