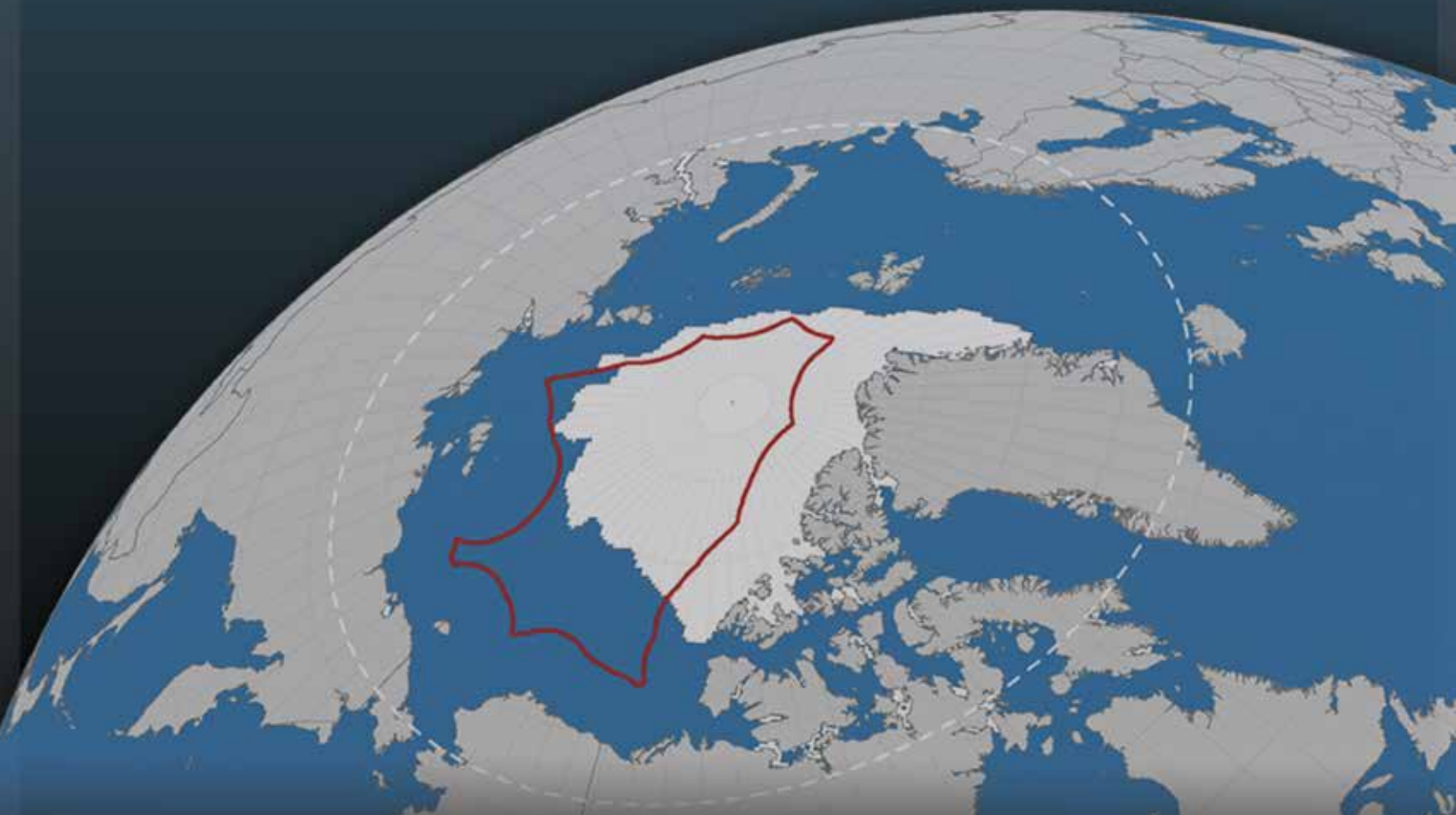
The International Waters of the Central Arctic Ocean

Protecting fisheries in an emerging ocean

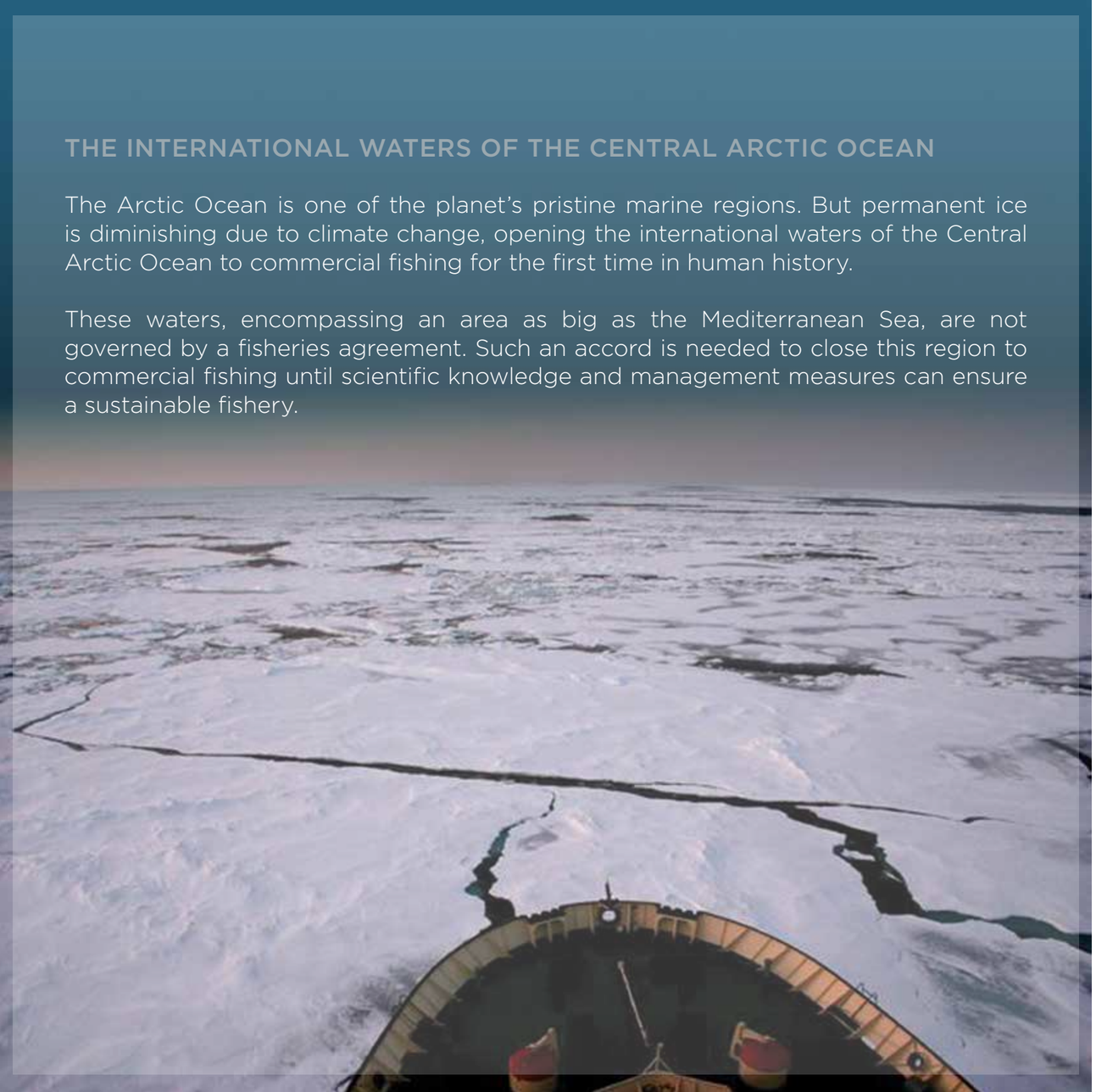


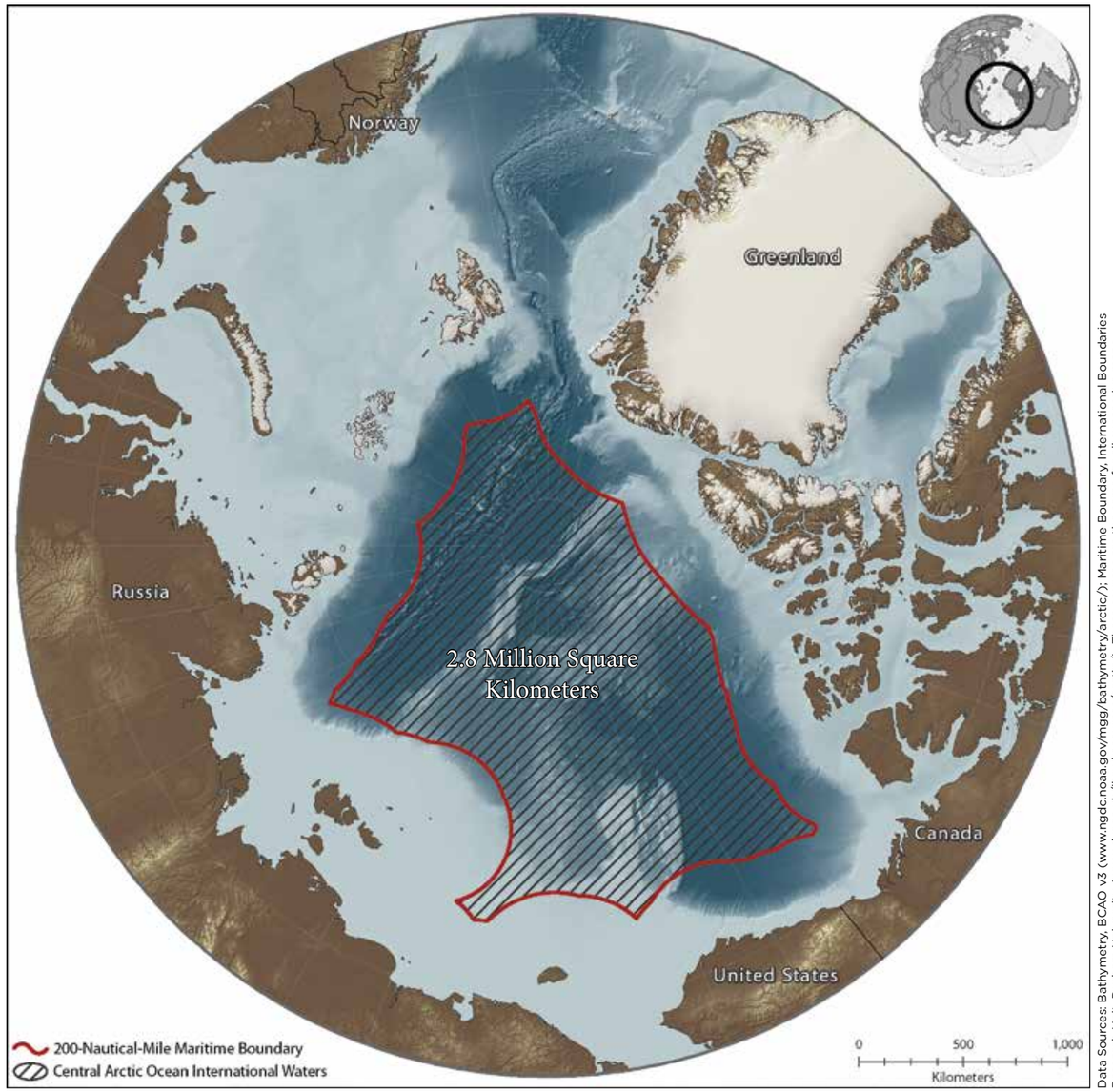
Arctic ice extent & international maritime boundary, September 2012

THE INTERNATIONAL WATERS OF THE CENTRAL ARCTIC OCEAN

The Arctic Ocean is one of the planet's pristine marine regions. But permanent ice is diminishing due to climate change, opening the international waters of the Central Arctic Ocean to commercial fishing for the first time in human history.

These waters, encompassing an area as big as the Mediterranean Sea, are not governed by a fisheries agreement. Such an accord is needed to close this region to commercial fishing until scientific knowledge and management measures can ensure a sustainable fishery.

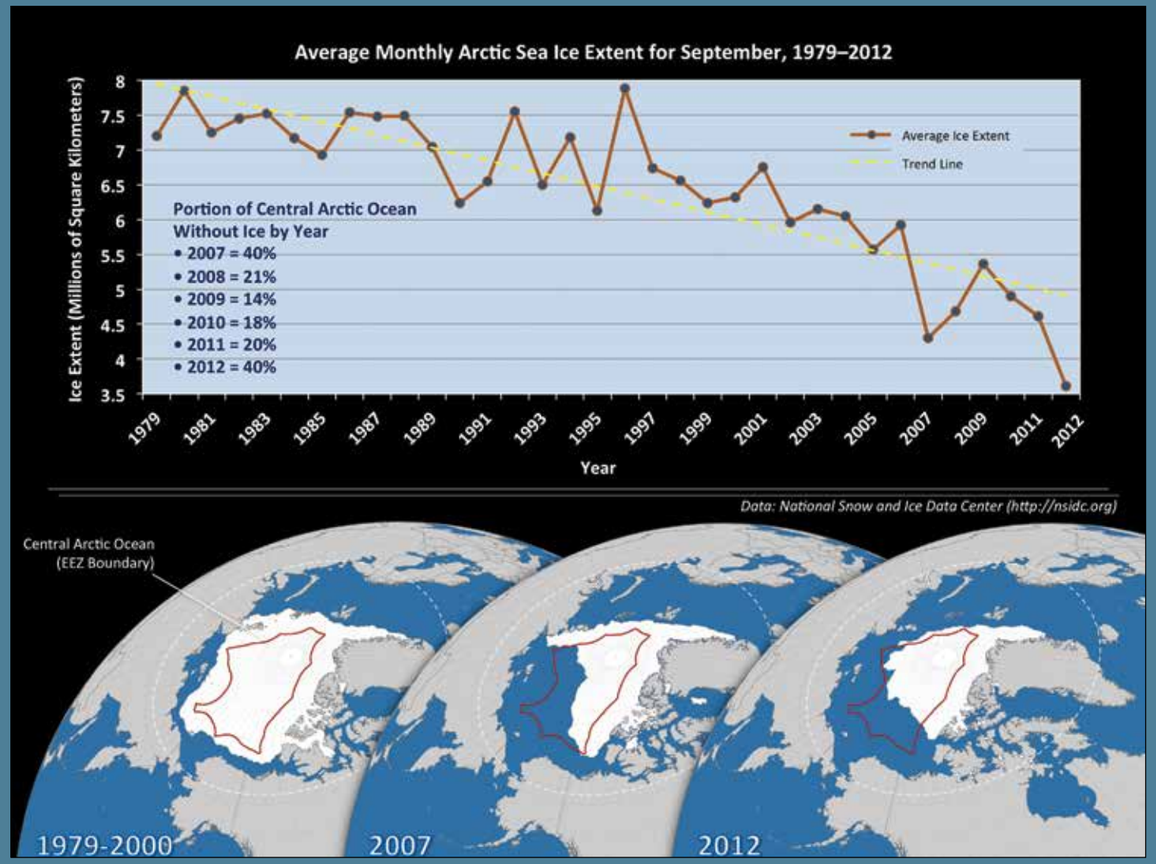




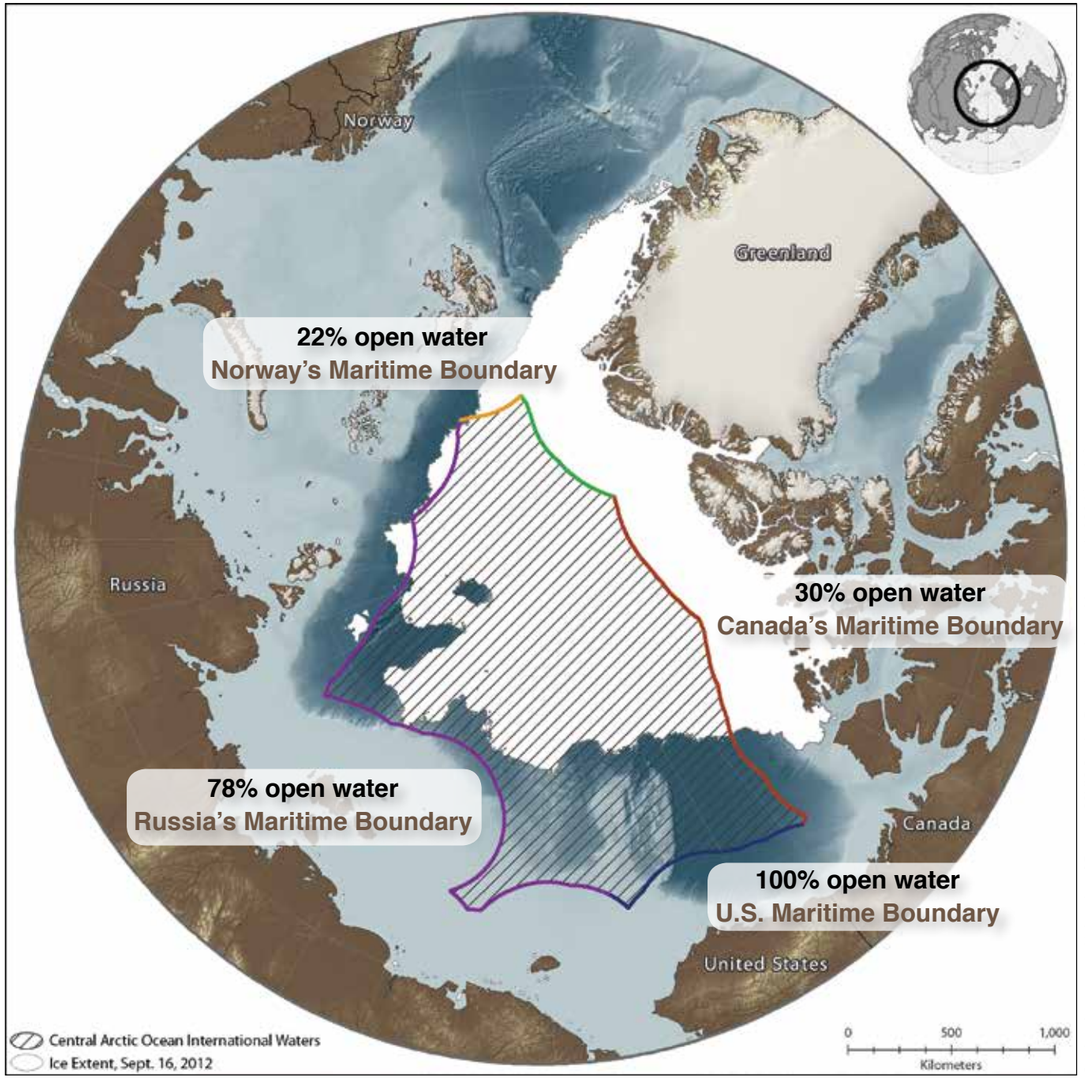
Data Sources: Bathymetry, BCAO v3 (www.ngdc.noaa.gov/mgg/bathymetry/arctic/); Maritime Boundary, International Boundaries Research Unit, Durham University (www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/resources/arctic/). These sources are the same for all successive maps.

MELTING ICE

The permanent ice that has covered the Arctic Ocean for more than 100,000 years is vanishing. In summer 2012, 40 percent of the Central Arctic Ocean—the region outside each nation's 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ)—was open water.

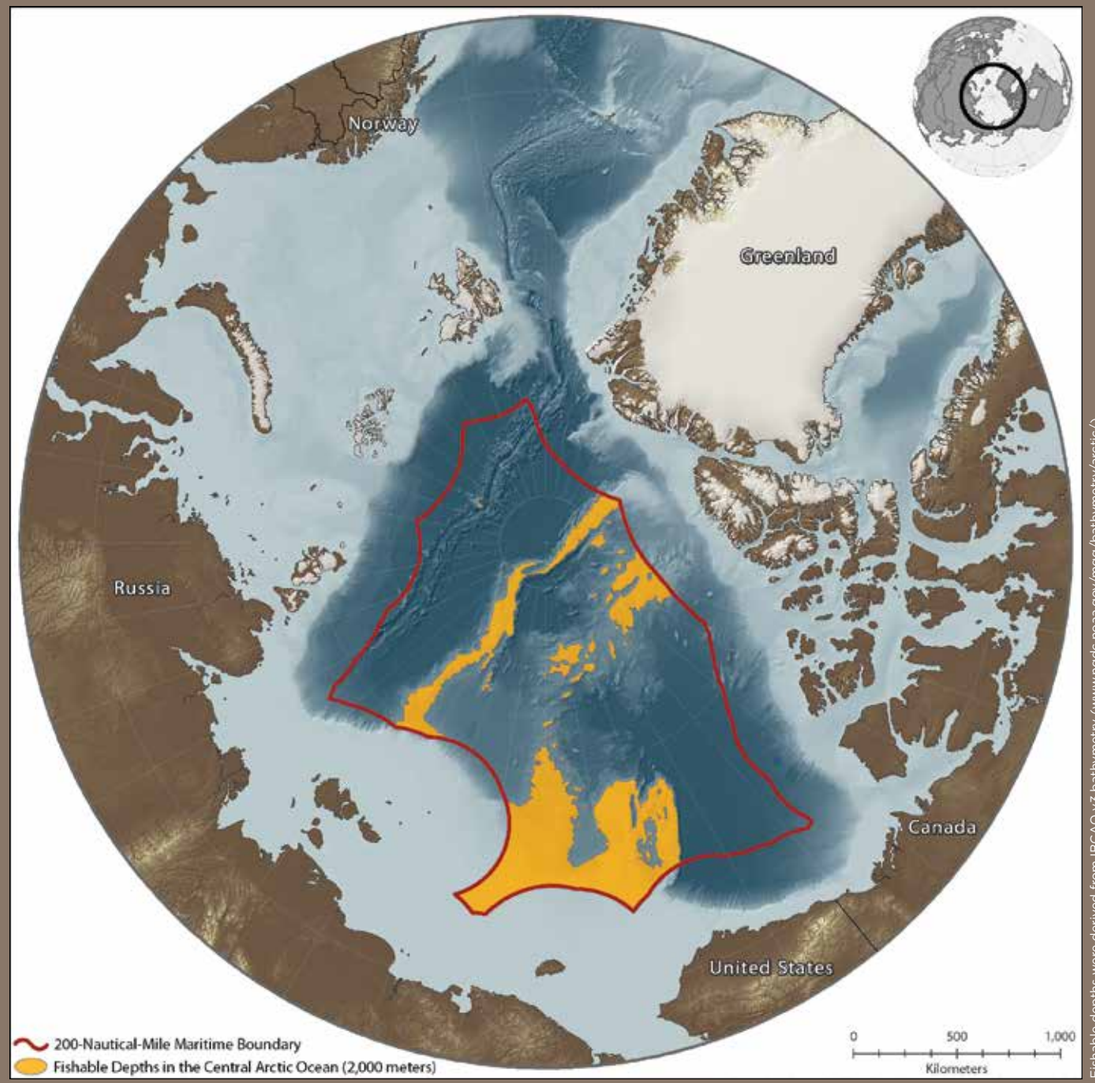


The international boundary of the Central Arctic Ocean shown in red.
Sea ice data source: National Snow and Ice Data Center (http://nsidc.org)



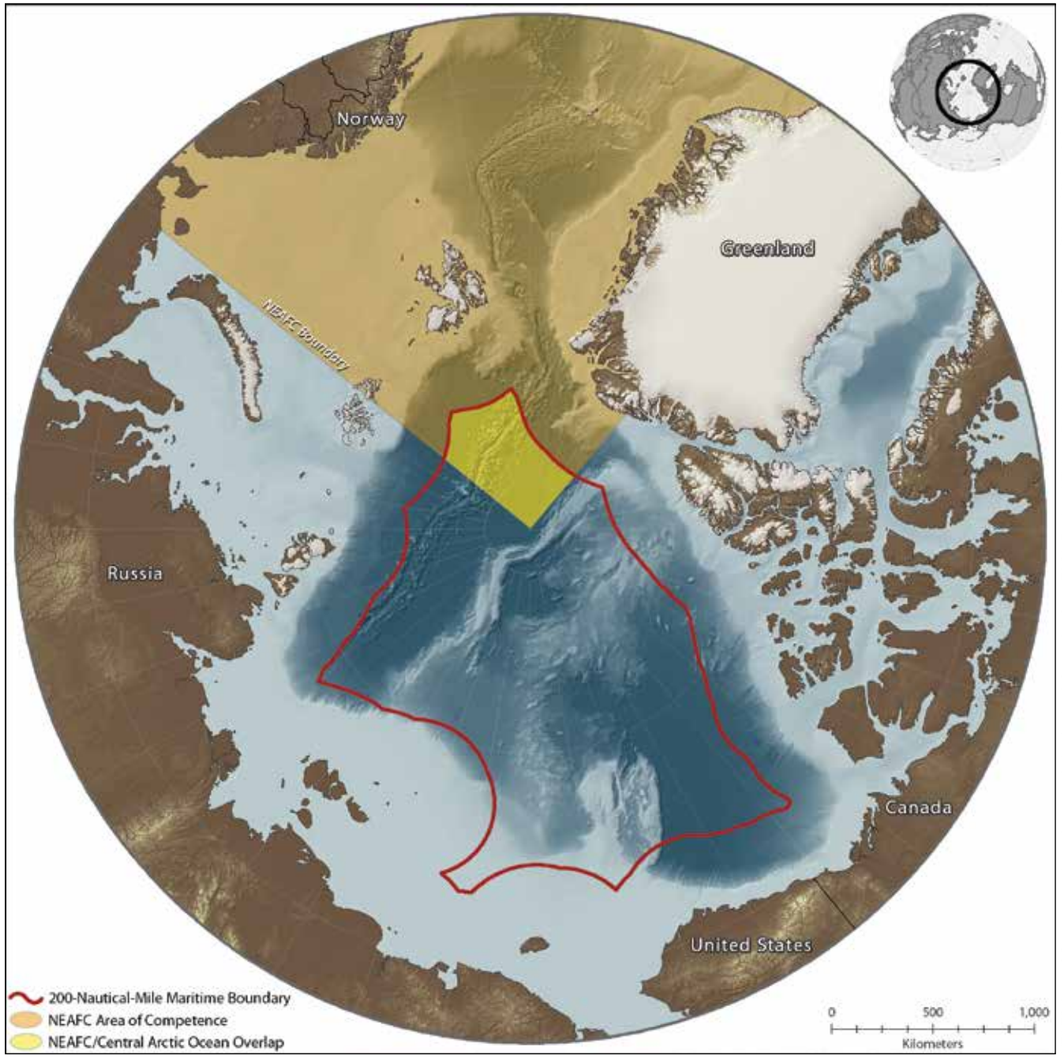
Sea ice data source: University of Bremen SSMIS Sea Ice Data (www.iup.uni-bremen.de:8084/ssmis/).

In summer 2012, four of the five Arctic coastal countries had open water on their maritime boundary with the Central Arctic Ocean.



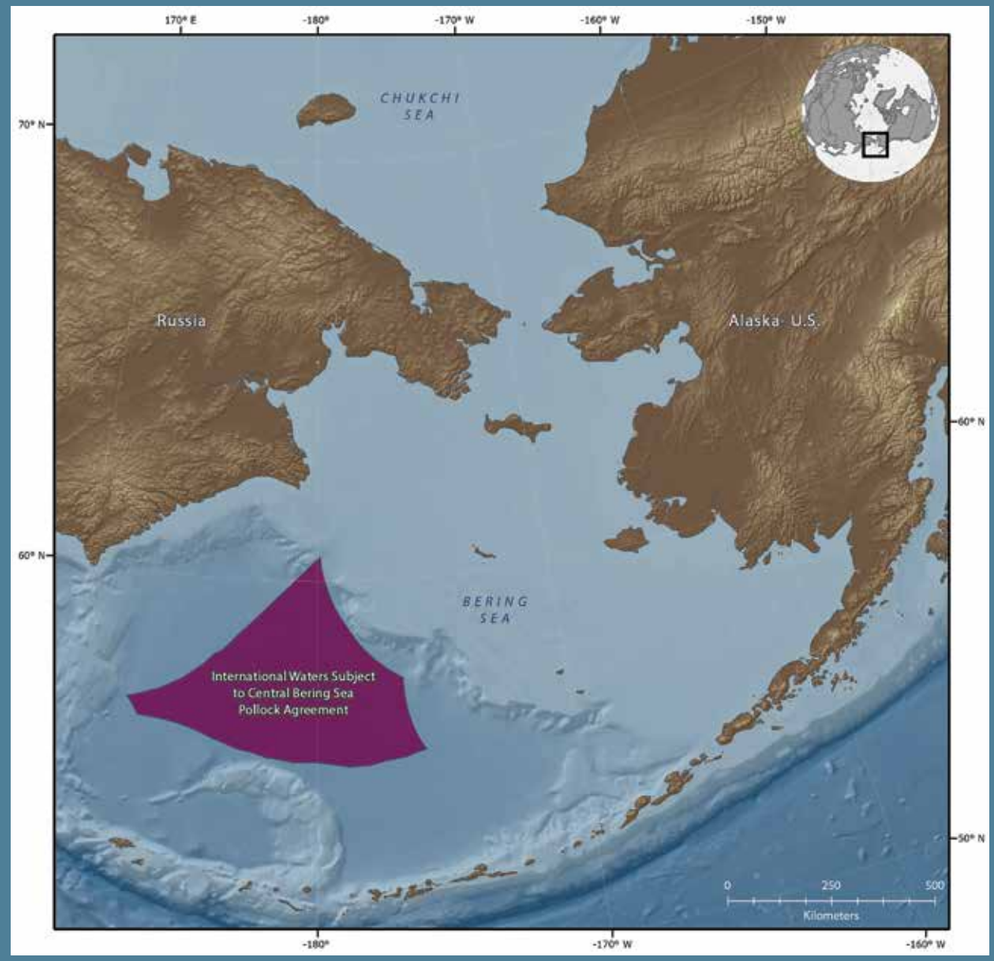
Fishable depths were derived from IBCAO v3 bathymetry (www.ngdc.noaa.gov/mgg/bathymetry/arctic/).

Twenty-two percent (614,000 square kilometers) of the Central Arctic Ocean is made up of ridges and continental shelves at fishable depths of 2,000 meters or less.



NEAFC Area of Competence boundary was derived using information from FAO's Regional Fishery Bodies website (www.fao.org/fishery/rfb/neafc/en).

Eight percent of the Central Arctic Ocean is within the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) Area of Competence. The remaining 92 percent of the Central Arctic Ocean, however, is not bound by any international rules, leaving it open to unregulated commercial fishing.



The Central Bering Sea Pollock Agreement boundary was extracted from the World EEZ v7 boundaries layer, downloaded from marineregions.org/downloads.php#eez.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, fishing fleets from South Korea, China, Poland, Japan, and other countries congregated in international waters in the central Bering Sea to catch pollock. The lack of scientific assessment and regulation led to overfishing, prompting the United States and Russia to seek an international response. The Central Bering Sea Pollock Agreement was signed by the United States, Russia, Japan, South Korea, Poland, and China and closed the area to pollock fishing until conservation conditions are met. It also established scientific standards and enforcement mechanisms. A similar agreement should be made before unregulated commercial fishing starts in the Central Arctic Ocean.

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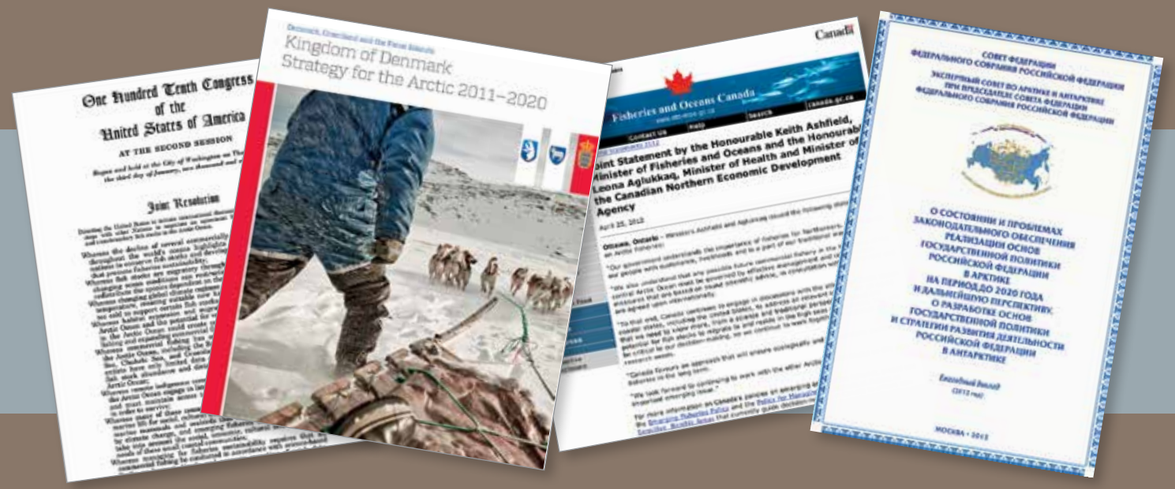
MOMENTUM TOWARD AN AGREEMENT



2008: **U.S.** law enacted making it government policy to pursue a fisheries agreement for the Central Arctic Ocean.

2011: **The Kingdom of Denmark** revises its Arctic policy to include a call for fisheries regulation before commercial fishing starts in the Central Arctic Ocean.

2012: **Canada** issues a statement saying any commercial fisheries in this area must be based on international rules.

2012: **Russia's** Expert Council on the Arctic and Antarctic issues a recommendation advising the chairman of the country's Council of Federation (the upper legislative house) that Arctic countries should cooperate to form a new international fisheries agreement preventing unregulated commercial fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean.

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THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS

THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS' INTERNATIONAL ARCTIC CAMPAIGN

is working with Arctic countries, scientists, the fishing industry, and indigenous peoples to achieve expanded support for an agreement that would protect the international waters of the Central Arctic Ocean and its living marine resources from unregulated or unsustainable commercial fishing.