NEWS RELEASE

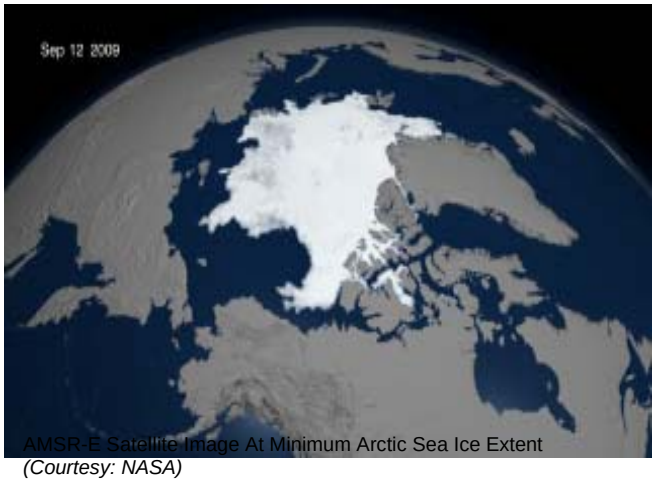
National Ice Services Advise of Continuing Navigation Hazards

Geneva Switzerland, October 16, 2009 - The International Ice Charting Working Group (IICWG) celebrates its 10th meeting at the World Meteorological Organization in Geneva with a focus on Arctic shipping. The IICWG issued the following statement:

"Sea ice and icebergs present a significant marine hazard that, considering the increase in the number and size of ships venturing into the Arctic and Antarctic, should be considered serious. Careful navigation of capable vessels by well-trained crews using the most up-to-date information is essential to avoid disaster.

"With less compacted sea ice, hazardous floes and icebergs are more mobile and less easily detected by mariners. Sustained monitoring and improved predictions of ice conditions are essential for safe navigation. The national ice services are working together in the International Ice Charting Working Group to ensure that vessels operating in ice encumbered waters have the best information possible."

Highlights of 2009:



AMSR-E Satellite Image At Minimum Arctic Sea Ice Extent
(Courtesy: NASA)

- Over 1,200 icebergs drifted into the trans-Atlantic shipping lanes, making the iceberg season in the North Atlantic the eleventh most severe since the tragic loss of the RMS Titanic in 1912.
- The sea ice pack in the Arctic Ocean shrank to its third-lowest extent since the beginning of quantitative satellite observations about 30 years ago. Although greater than the record lows in 2007 and 2008, the minimum ice extent was still well below normal.
- Although ice conditions in the Northwest Passage were more difficult for shipping than in each of the three previous years, a record number of pleasure craft transited the Passage.
- The citizens of Nuuk, Greenland saw the cruise ship Crown Princess, with over 4,000 people on board, steam into their harbour, the farthest north

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that such a large passenger vessel has ever ventured in normally ice infested waters.

- Marine transportation of natural resources is increasing from Russian Arctic ports to the West.
- Two German heavy-lift ships successfully traversed the Northeast Passage from Korea to Novyi Port in the Russian Federation, in what their company believes is the beginning of more regular use of this Arctic shipping route.

The IICWG was formed in 1999 to promote cooperation between the world's ice services on all matters concerning sea ice and icebergs and brings together the operational ice services of Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Germany, Norway, Russian Federation, Sweden, United States and the International Ice Patrol. These services are charged with monitoring sea ice and icebergs for marine safety.

For more information on the IICWG, see ***http://nsidc.org/noaa/iicwg/***.

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