

NEWS RELEASE

National Ice Services Advise of Continuing Navigation Hazards

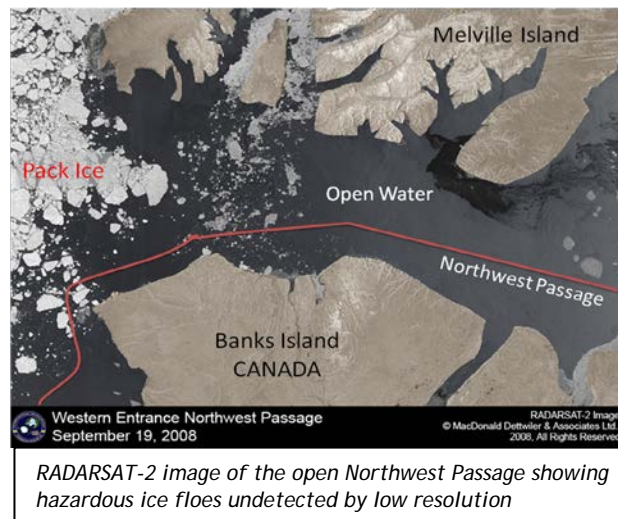
Luleå, Sweden, October 24, 2008 - The International Ice Charting Working Group (IICWG) meeting in Luleå, Sweden, issued the following statement:

“For the first time in recorded history, national ice charts showed that both the Northwest Passage and the Northern Sea Route were simultaneously open water for a brief period in September 2008. Last winter in the Baltic Sea, the ice extent was the lowest since records began in 1720. Conversely, Antarctic sea ice has been increasing slightly and the number of icebergs in the area of the Titanic tragedy was 50% higher than the last 4 years combined. Although Arctic sea ice has been diminishing in the summer, navigational routes in ice laden waters will continue to have an ice cover that will be extremely variable in severity and duration. The IICWG cautions that sea ice and icebergs will present significant hazards to navigation for the foreseeable future.”

“At lower concentrations, hazardous ice floes and icebergs are more mobile and less easily detected by mariners. Sustained monitoring with high resolution satellite sensors combined with surface and aerial reports is essential for safe navigation. The national ice services cooperate in the IICWG to share information and best practices to ensure maritime safety in ice and iceberg infested waters.”

Key Points for 2008:

- The Northwest passage through the Canadian Arctic Archipelago was open water for a four week period around September 1.
- The Northern Sea Route of the Russian Federation was open water for a two week period around September 12.
- Open water is defined as, “freely navigable water in which sea ice is present in concentrations of less than 1/10.”



- Multi-year ice in the Arctic continues to suffer dramatic loss and now comprises only about one-quarter of the ice pack – far less than what has been considered normal. Most of the pack consists of seasonal ice that is considerably thinner and weaker in many places.
- In the Baltic Sea, this year's record low ice extent was only 23% of the average extent (49,000 vs 214,000 square kilometers). Previous low extents were reached in 1990, 1960, and 1930 interspersed with more severe ice seasons.
- Nearly 1000 icebergs drifted in the trans-Atlantic shipping lanes near the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, almost as many as in 1912 when the RMS Titanic sank on her maiden voyage.

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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