

Ocean Leadership Consortium Public Policy Forum focuses on Arctic issues

March 4, 2015

The 2015 Consortium for Ocean Leadership Public Policy Forum on Predicting and Preparing for a Changing Arctic took place on March 4. The forum addressed scientific needs in the Arctic, the necessity of forecasting the Arctic's future, and the impacts of Arctic change on the rest of the U.S. A variety of speakers both from academic and scientific communities, the military, and political and social realms offered in-depth perspectives on the Arctic.

Panels addressed the heightened role of the shipping industry in the Arctic as sea ice retreats and commerce finds newer, faster passage across the top of the world. Military representatives brought up the implications of increased traffic on border protections, which could potentially require increased military presence in the Arctic. A scientific panel spoke on the importance of forecasting sea ice to arctic shipping and residents. The scientific panel also addressed shifting migration ranges and biological diversity as well as the effects of melting permafrost on infrastructure and climate.

Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Angus King (I-ME) addressed the forum, highlighting the U.S.'s role as an Arctic nation and emphasizing the need for more icebreakers, ships designed to navigate ice-filled water. The U.S. currently has only two ships able to navigate ice covered polar regions: the *Polar Star* and the *USCGC Healy*, which is mainly a scientific vessel, compared to Russia's fleet of 29 icebreakers. Senator Murkowski announced the founding of an Arctic Caucus, which she invited all senators to join because the U.S. is an Arctic nation. Senator King stated his support for and urged agreement to the Law of the Sea, and peaceful cooperation in Arctic.

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