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On July 28, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) released its 2015-2020 plan for the Arctic region, focusing on coastal erosion and its effect on coastal communities. The plan also prioritizes mapping the Arctic to better understand the distribution of minerals and energy resources in Alaska. The study comes on the heels of the Obama Administration's approval of offshore drilling in the region by the Royal Dutch Shell oil company.

Additionally, USGS will study the impacts of climate change on the spread of disease and environmental health. The plan identifies melting permafrost and overall warming trends as potential causes for environmental damage and further avenues of study.

The United States is chair of the intergovernmental Arctic Council from April 2015 through April 2017.

Sources: E&E News, U.S. Geological Survey

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