



Arctic Council SAO plenary meeting (eDocs code: ACSAOUS203)  
5-6 October 2016, Portland, Maine, U.S.A.

Document Title

Adaptation and Resilience in the Arctic; A Primer on the Arctic Resilience Report, the Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic Report, and the Arctic Resilience Action Framework

Agenda item number

5.3-3

Submitted by

ARAF Chair

Document filename

EDOCS-3823-v1A-  
ACSAOUS203\_Portland\_2016\_5-3-3\_Adaptation\_and\_Resilience\_in  
Arctic\_A\_primer\_on\_AACA-ARAF.PDF

Number of pages, not including this cover sheet

2

Type (e.g. report, progress report, etc.)

Background paper

# **Adaptation and Resilience in the Arctic**

A Primer on the Arctic Resilience Report, the  
Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic Report, and the Arctic Resilience Action Framework  
2 September, 2016

## ***Introduction***

The Arctic Council is working to produce two key reports that will improve our shared understanding of the impacts and effects of a changing Arctic upon communities and ecosystems, as well as practices for avoiding and responding to those impacts. The final scientific report of the Arctic Resilience Assessment (ARA) will be released in late 2016, while the Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic (AACA) team will release three regional scientific assessment reports in early 2017.

In March 2016, the Senior Arctic Officials requested the development of an Arctic Resilience Action Framework (ARAF) that builds on the key findings of the ARA and the AACA reports to provide a framework of common priorities and targets. The ARAF will promote improved collaboration and effectiveness among the Arctic Council and Arctic Council partners as they strive to enhance the resilience of the region. The purpose of this two-page primer is to describe the complementary and distinct purposes of the ARA, AACA, and ARAF.

## ***What is the difference between ‘adaptation’ and ‘resilience’?***

Adaptation and resilience are related but not interchangeable concepts. Adaptation is an active adjustment, in response to change, which moderates disruption or takes advantage of opportunities. Resilience is a condition that describes a system or community’s ability to absorb disruption and “bounce back”, or attain a desired future. While both terms are used in discussions of climate change response strategies, adaptation is described in terms of specific actions and measures taken, while resilience is an underlying capacity that can enable effective adaptation. Resilience can be altered – strengthened or undermined – often as a result of such efforts as adaptation.

## ***How are the ARA and AACA reports similar?***

The key commonality between these two assessments is that they both focus on the question "What can be done to prepare for Arctic changes?" To date, most Arctic Council assessments regarding Arctic change have focused primarily on identifying or describing the state of the science related to specific characteristics, or ongoing changes in the characteristics, of a given Arctic system. The ARA and AACA move beyond assessing the state of science; they evaluate the societal actions that can and are being taken to adapt to a changing Arctic, build resilience, and cope with both climate change and other processes affecting the Arctic.

## ***How are the ARA and AACA reports different?***

While the ARA and AACA address similar questions, they employ different and complementary methodologies. AACA examines adaptation opportunities based on projections well into the future. In contrast, the ARA draws on a substantial set of case studies from the recent past where major thresholds (or tipping points) were already apparent, in order to identify properties that make systems more resilient to both anticipated and unanticipated changes. By building our understanding of the properties of resilience and anticipating future adaptation opportunities, these two efforts can combine to provide the foundation for a powerful roadmap for addressing climate and other impacts.

***What does the ARAF seek to accomplish?***

In order to provide that roadmap, the ARAF will support and coordinate the actions of the Arctic Council and Arctic Council partners that contribute to adaptation and resilience in the Arctic. Building on the ARA, the AACA, and the ongoing work of Arctic Council Working Groups, the ARAF articulates a set of priorities that can be used by Arctic actors to identify actions that will strengthen resilience in the region. The ARAF will be the first comprehensive regional adaptation and resilience framework for the Arctic. A community of practice will be formed that periodically evaluates the implementation of the ARAF in order to identify effective practices and adjust priorities as necessary.

***What are some additional ways that the ARA, the AACA and ARAF complement one another?***

The ARA and AACA both provide valuable information and analysis on how to address the impacts associated with a rapidly changing Arctic. The ARA and AACA author teams are sharing information, including insights from ARA case study results and downscaled AACA climate projections. The ARA and AACA teams are also exploring opportunities to coordinate their derivative and outreach products and syntheses in the coming months. Currently, products under discussion for coordination include joint summaries, recommendations, web products, and specific outreach strategies.

The ARAF builds on the key findings of the ARA and AACA regional reports. Both the ARA and AACA provide insights into effective practices for adaptation and resilience, and the ARAF articulates a set of “guiding principles” for enhancing adaptation and resilience in the region that are largely drawn from the ARA and AACA reports. Many of the priorities and action areas that are outlined in the ARAF are drawn from the ARA and AACA reports. The ARA and AACA will continue informing resilience and adaptation priorities in the region as they are updated in ongoing assessments. As the implementation of the ARAF is evaluated, lessons learned will feed back into the ARA and AACA assessment processes. All of the reports will provide information that can facilitate effective responses to rapidly changing conditions at the international, national, and sub-national levels.