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CAFF Progress report

SAO Meeting November 2021

The first board meeting of the Finnish Chairmanship of CAFF was held in a hybrid fashion both in Kilpisjärvi, Finland and online in September 6-9. The impacts of the COVID -19 pandemic have meant that several workshops scheduled since the last SAO meeting have been moved online, i.e., annual meetings for CAFF's Coastal, Freshwater and Marine Monitoring Groups; and the Arctic Wildland Fire Sharing Circle held on November 17-18. Focus continues on implementing the *Actions for Arctic Biodiversity 2013-2021: Implementing the recommendations of the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (ABA)*.

Action Plan for Biodiversity 2013-2023: Implementing the recommendations of the Arctic Biodiversity Assessments (*Actions for Arctic Biodiversity*)

Development of the new *Actions for Arctic Biodiversity 2023-2030* was delayed because of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted on the ability to organise workshops and facilitate discussions needed to complete the Plan in time for the 2021 Arctic Council Ministerial. This allows more time to develop content and structure; including alignment with the post-2020 UN Global Biodiversity Framework, currently under development. The [current plan](#) extended until 2023 continues as the guiding framework for CAFF and the Arctic Council on biodiversity activities. A report providing an overview of implementation of the current Action Plan, and ways forward, delivered to the 2021 Ministerial.

Activities

Activities since the last SAO meeting focused on implementation of CAFFs work plan 2021-2023, including:

- Development of the new Actions for Arctic Biodiversity for 2023-2030. This entailed:
 - consulting with Arctic States, PPs and experts involved in CAFF work;
 - conducting analyses of the achievements under the current Biodiversity Action Plan since 2013 to inform development of the new Action Plan for Biodiversity: 2023-2030;
 - Analysing the current Action plan to determine the status of implementing actions, identifying areas where progress had been challenging; and
 - Developing an overview of work on biodiversity in the Arctic Council; in particular in CAFF and how this work can influence change; and evaluating the status on progress towards implementation of the current Action Plan for biodiversity.
- Implementation of the *Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme (CBMP) Strategic Plan (2021-2025)* focusing on ensuring the program's continued relevance, implementation, and sustainability. This included following up on the key findings and advice from the first *State of the Arctic (Terrestrial, Freshwater, Marine) Biodiversity* reports, which summarize the status and trends in key elements of the Arctic environments and provide advice on how to improve Arctic biodiversity monitoring.
- Implementation of the Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative ([AMBI](#)), workplan 2019-2025, including developing a Record of Observer Contributions to AMBI with the Spanish Polar Committee, additional partnership development with Observer states and organizations to promote on-the-ground conservation activities, PP engagement, report, and development, supporting the Midcontinental Shorebird Conservation Initiative, communications activities (graphics, maps,) etc.
- Development of a plan to follow-up on the Key Findings and recommendations of *Resilience & Management of Arctic Wetlands (RAW)* summary for policy-makers delivered to the 2021

Ministerial. Preparation of [side events](#) at the UNFCCC COP26 to communicate the outcomes from RAW and release of a factsheet on Arctic Peatlands and Mineral Wetlands mapping.

- Continue work on the joint AMAP-CAFF initiative addressing [climate change impacts on Arctic marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems and ecosystem feedbacks](#). Work is underway on a plan for the implementation of this project under the AMAP and CAFF workplans for 2021-2025. The implementation plan will be ready by the end of 2021 and will include a workshop to facilitate co-production with Permanent Participants.
- Development of the joint PAME-CAFF project: *Marine Invasive Alien Species in Arctic Waters* aims to implement priority actions from The Arctic Invasive Alien Species ([ARIAS](#)) Strategy and Action Plan. The projects' focus is on the potential for unwanted transfer of marine invasive alien species by ships via ballast water and biofouling into and within Arctic waters.
- Continued work on the joint CAFF-PAME initiative *Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)*; in the Arctic Marine environment to provide an overview of the current range and understanding of international and national criteria used for identification of OECMs in the Arctic; and facilitate an exchange of information among the Arctic Council members on the range of information and application of OECMs. Including preparation of the 2021 report *Status and Trends for Arctic Conservation Measures*.
- Continued work on the *Arctic Wildland Fire Ecology Mapping and Monitoring Project (ArcticFIRE)*. This entailed working with EPPR to organise a Sharing Circle scheduled for 17-18 Nov, where projects and people engaged in Arctic Fire issues could learn about work in progress.
- Development of a project to follow-up on the CAFF *youth engagement strategy* that includes developing options for youth engagement in CAFF activities; and organising a writing competition.
- Conducting communication and outreach on CAFF activities through lectures, presentations, and social media, as well as in meetings and conferences, including development of a video series about CAFF and development of a prototype Arctic Biodiversity Dashboard intended as a user/policy-friendly interactive platform that visualizes datasets for regional target tracking and reporting e.g., for tracking progress towards CBD, SDG, targets. Communications is one of the priorities for the Finnish CAFF Chairship and the Chairship has obtained national funding to support communications activities.
- Planning of the next CAFF Board meetings in Kittilä 31.1. – 4.2.2022 and Utsjoki 5. – 9.9.2022.

Other ongoing activities include project development e.g., indicator development; data aggregation and rescue; identification of knowledge gaps; development and implementation of coordinated monitoring plans (Coastal, Freshwater, Marine, Terrestrial); and reporting on status and trends in biodiversity.