Why are we concerned about the Arctic?

- The impacts of the human-induced climate crisis and increased industrial development, as sea ice melts and permafrost thaws, threaten Arctic biodiversity and ecosystems as well as the livelihoods and cultures of Arctic peoples.

- As the Arctic heats up at almost three times the global rate, the effects of Arctic change are felt far beyond the region. With Arctic temperatures rising by 3–10°C by the end of the century the region’s functioning as the global refrigerator and a vault of ice and carbon will stall, exacerbating global impacts from rising sea levels and temperatures.

What needs to happen?

- Countries must urgently step up their ambition to cut greenhouse gas emissions, otherwise the world will continue to feel the cascading effects of a rapidly warming Arctic. The Arctic will lose summer sea ice within a few decades along with the species and cultures that depend on it. Arctic states must lead the way.

- The Arctic ecosystems and traditional territories of Arctic peoples transcend political boundaries. Ecosystems and migrating animals cross international borders, making collaboration among Arctic states essential.

- Arctic ecosystems, habitats, and species, which provide many benefits to people in the Arctic and beyond, must be conserved to bolster the resilience of the region’s unique and vulnerable biodiversity. Today, only 8 per cent of the world’s oceans are protected. Less than 5 per cent of the Arctic Ocean is protected.

- Governments, Indigenous Peoples and local communities must find ways to conserve at least 30 per cent of all land, seas and freshwater. We must protect and sustainably manage Arctic nature, building the resilience of these land- and seascapes and the people that depend on them for food and livelihoods.

What is WWF doing?

WWF works to manage the transformations taking place in ways that support and benefit all life in the region and the rest of the planet.

- To build greater resilience for Arctic marine life and meet the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) targets, WWF has produced ArcNet, a proposed network for marine conservation that prioritizes marine life and the important functions that the Arctic provides globally. Establishing this network helps build climate resilience and sustainability, while meeting ambitious national and international targets to protect at least 30 per cent of the planet by 2030.

- ArcNet is a map that shows the vision for a network of priority areas that governments and Indigenous Peoples need to conserve across the Arctic Ocean. ArcNet is also a concrete proposal and tool for marine planning and management and is designed to enable broad participation.
WWF is further bringing connectivity conservation to the Arctic through our Arctic blue corridors project, which will safeguard the superhighways of the 20+ species of whales that migrate into and within the Arctic Ocean. These corridors connect the Arctic to the rest of the world and enable whales to take advantage of the region’s rich productivity.

WWF is working towards robust, precautionary regulation, backed by science, to protect marine mammals and other noise-sensitive species from the increasing threats of underwater noise pollution. Working with governments and industry, we will turn down the volume on underwater noise in important habitats to create sound sanctuaries and maintain healthy oceans.

To prepare for the coming changes and to inform conservation, management, and sustainable development strategies, WWF is convening international experts in the Arctic Conservation Forecast Initiative. The aim is to analyze the latest climate projections of future Arctic air and ocean temperatures, snow, permafrost, and sea ice, and describe how these changes will affect ecosystems, habitats and species.

WWF is working towards the immediate adoption of a ban on heavy fuel oil (HFO) to reduce black carbon without exceptions and for the gradual phase-out of the overall use of fossil fuels with particular focus on oil-based fuels.

WWF is advocating for improvements in the International Maritime Organization’s Polar Code. A review done by WWF has revealed deficiencies and concludes that the Code does not go far enough in preventing potential catastrophic consequences for marine life from shipping in Arctic waters.

WWF is committed to strengthening Arctic governance by supporting constructive dialogue and exploring options for policymakers to ensure effective and inclusive stewardship, ecosystem-based management and sustainable development, with focus on the Central Arctic Ocean.

<5% OF THE ARCTIC OCEAN IS PROTECTED.

WWF launched its Arctic Programme in 1992

We:
- Advocate for climate change mitigation and adaptation and strengthening resilience in the Arctic.
- Work to protect key marine, coastal, terrestrial and freshwater habitats and the species within them.
- Promote sustainable energy, shipping and economic development.
- Engage in Arctic governance to fill gaps and strengthen existing institutions.

The programme leverages conservation leadership and expertise across the WWF network and unites the work of 10 national offices.

The WWF Arctic Programme is the only circumpolar environmental non-governmental organization that has Observer status at the Arctic Council.