

Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks Strategy: 2018-2028

Introduction

The Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) is a joint initiative of the Arctic Council and the International Arctic Science Committee that aims to strengthen multinational engagement in pan-Arctic observing. The SAON process was established in 2011 at the Seventh Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council (AC) via the Nuuk Declaration. This declaration recognizes the “importance of the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) process as a major legacy of the International Polar Year for enhancing scientific observations and data-sharing.” The declaration also defines the SAON governance structure and Terms of Reference, which were formally approved in 2012¹.

In 2014, the SAON Board finalized its first implementation plan, which established two committees: The Arctic Data Committee (ADC) and the Committee on Observations and Networks (CON). The ADC aims to promote and facilitate international collaboration to establish free, ethically open², sustained, and timely access to Arctic data through easily accessible and interoperable systems. The CON aims to promote and facilitate international collaboration towards a pan-Arctic Observing System, which is defined as a sustained, integrated and multi-disciplinary system for observing this region of rapid change.

The following SAON Strategy document provides a 10-year strategy to address current and future Arctic observing needs. The document, approved by the SAON Board in January 2018, sets priorities for how SAON will fulfil its mission. It describes SAON’s vision, mission, guiding principle and goals, and outlines the manner in which the goals will be achieved.

¹ https://www.arcticobserving.org/images/pdf/Terms_of_Reference/saon-terms-of-reference.pdf

² The source of the concept “ethically open” is International Arctic Science Committee, 2013. Statement of Principles and Practices for Arctic Data Management: <https://www.iasc.info/data-observations/iasc-data-statement>

Vision

SAON's vision is a connected, collaborative, and comprehensive long-term pan- Arctic Observing System that serves societal needs.

Mission

SAON facilitates, coordinates, and advocates for coordinated international pan-Arctic observations and mobilizes the support needed to sustain them.

Guiding Principles

The SAON process is guided by the following principles:

- SAON values both research and operational needs for Arctic observations;
- The Observing System is implemented and sustained through open cooperation among all those committed to Arctic observations under a common SAON umbrella;
- The design and operation of the Observing System will be guided by a balance between bottom-up and top-down needs and priorities;
- SAON will promote contributions of all types of observations including but not limited to *in situ*, remotely sensed, and community-based observations, and the infrastructure supporting them;
- The Observing System will use Indigenous and local knowledge guided by ethical use and honouring the proprietary rights of data contributors;
- SAON will promote ethically free and open access to ethically-collected data;
- SAON will work with counterparts in the Antarctic, global, and national observation communities, where appropriate.

Following these principles, SAON aims to promote Arctic observing and to mobilize the support needed to achieve full implementation and sustain operations on time scales of decades and beyond.

SAON itself will not undertake research, policymaking, observations, data archiving, or funding of these efforts. SAON will however encourage and promote collaboration among ongoing networks/sites/systems and data centers, the organizations that support them, or appropriate decision-makers within these areas.

Goals

In keeping with the above vision and mission, SAON has adopted the following three goals and SAON's guiding principles support its work across these:

1. Create a roadmap to a well-integrated Arctic Observing System;
2. Promote free and ethically open access to all Arctic observational data; and
3. Ensure sustainability of Arctic observing.

Addressing these goals will require the expertise and cooperation of a wide range of stakeholders and knowledge systems. While the Arctic Council is well-positioned to coordinate state-level priorities and actions, effective implementation of the SAON Strategy will require partnerships. These partnerships include but are not limited to collaborations with policy-makers at all levels, Arctic Indigenous Peoples organizations, non-Arctic states, academia, civil society and the private sector, as well as engagement from other multilateral/international groups. SAON believes that effective implementation will require the participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and gender-balanced approaches.