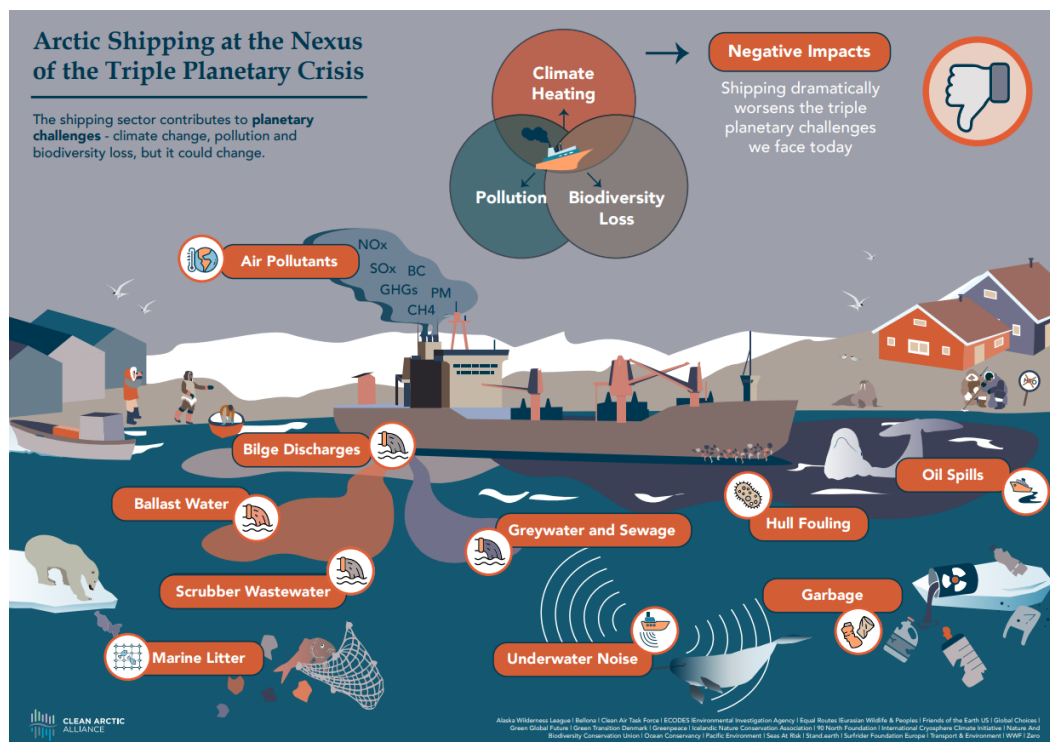


CALL FOR NEW ARCTIC COUNCIL CHAIR TO TAKE LEAD ON CONTROLLING SUPER POLLUTANTS FROM SHIPPING

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Infographic: Arctic Shipping at the Nexus of the Triple Planetary Crisis

Ahead of the Kingdom of Denmark taking over the Arctic Council Chairship from Norway next week, the [Clean Arctic Alliance](#) is calling on government ministers and Senior Arctic Officials from Arctic Council member and observer states to commit to curbing the rise of black carbon and methane pollution from shipping in the Arctic (see sections on **black carbon and methane below**).

When [the 14th meeting of the Arctic Council takes place in a virtual format on 12 May](#), the outgoing Norwegian chair is expected to highlight its accomplishments over the past two years, while the incoming Kingdom of Denmark chair, including Greenland and the Faroe Islands, will outline its priorities for the coming two years.

“Tackling black carbon and methane pollution from marine traffic could dramatically reduce the impacts of the climate crisis before 2030 – this should be a top priority for Arctic Council member and observer states next week”, said **Dr Sian Prior, Lead Advisor** to the **Clean Arctic Alliance**. “It’s critical that urgent action be taken within every sector, including Arctic shipping, in the next five years, in order to reverse the trend in sea ice loss, maintain the Arctic’s role in global cooling, and prevent climate tipping points with irreversible consequences. Ministers and Senior Arctic Officials attending this year’s 14th Arctic Council meeting must drive this action by setting bold targets for reductions of short-lived climate ‘super pollutants’ – like black carbon and methane.”

The period 2025-2030 is short-term opportunity for the shipping sector to take climate action and is the first big International Maritime Organization deadline for reducing shipping’s climate impact ([the first target is 20%, striving for 30% by 2030](#)), while [scientists are now expecting to see the first summer ice free Arctic day by the 2030s](#).

In its [vision for the incoming Arctic Council Chair’s 2025-2027 mandate](#), the Clean Arctic Alliance provides guidance for the Kingdom of Denmark “to demonstrate global leadership with respect to a region of the world that is in serious trouble” on several key issues, including reducing underwater radiated noise, eliminating pollution discharges into the ocean, dealing with the risks of oil spills, and most urgently minimizing emissions of greenhouse gases and short-lived climate super pollutants from shipping, including black carbon and methane.

“We’re counting on all Arctic Council members and observer states to commit to urgent action on curbing the rise of black carbon and methane emissions from shipping in the Arctic”, said **Andrew Dumbrille, Special Advisor** to the **Clean Arctic Alliance**. “There’s good news on tackling pollution from ships in the Arctic – dealing with black carbon and methane could dramatically reduce the impacts of the climate crisis before 2030.”

“Black carbon could be reduced between 50-80% overnight by switching away from heavy fuel oils to distillate fuels, while methane emissions can be avoided by making fuel choices that don’t involve liquefied natural gas (LNG) or other methane based fuels”, said **Dumbrille**. “The Arctic Council and its members must commit to new and ambitious black carbon reduction targets to incentivize the switch away from residual heavy fuels and kick start the eventual decarbonization of the entire Arctic shipping fleet.”

Ahead of the 14th Arctic Council meeting, Clean Arctic Alliance member organisations and allies also called for action:

“Now that Royal Arctic Line, the seaborne freight company owned by the Government of Greenland responsible for imports and exports, has already decided voluntarily [to phase out heavy fuel oil and scrubbers to reduce Arctic pollution](#), we hope that Greenland, as chair of the Arctic Council, will urge other shipping companies and states to take similar actions to protect the unique fragile Arctic ecosystems”, said **Kåre Press-Kristensen, Senior Advisor** to [Green Global Future](#).

“The Tribes of the Bering Strait depend on healthy marine ecosystems for our food, culture, and wellbeing. Super pollutants such as black carbon and methane pose a serious risk to those values and our ways of life in the Arctic”, said **Melanie Bahnke, President, Kawerak, Inc.** “The Arctic Council has a unique opportunity to agree to commitments which can protect and safeguard food sovereignty and habitats which Tribes depend upon. We’re hopeful that all members and observers to the Arctic Council take on ambitious targets and measures to reduce black carbon and methane in not only the shipping sector but in all activities across the Arctic.”

“We believe that the Greenland chairmanship will truly prioritise Arctic nature and indigenous communities over oil, gas, and mineral extraction, including deep sea mining, and promote respect of sovereignty and rule of law in the Arctic, much needed in the current political context”, said **Ksenia Vakhrusheva, Project Manager and Policy Advisor** at [Bellona](#). “We also urge the Arctic Council under the new chair to closely monitor the shadow oil fleet going through the Arctic waters – a major threat to the Arctic environment at the moment.”

“Protecting the Arctic from climate change is a huge and urgent challenge, but we know how to solve it!”, said **Lola Berna, Project Manager** at [ECODES](#). “Cutting down super pollutants emissions is a fast way of reducing our impact on the environment and the Arctic Council needs to act consequently, incentivizing cleaner ways of propulsion while banning those that emit black carbon and methane.”

“Nowhere on this planet would the impacts of black carbon emissions and other harmful super pollutants be more devastating than the highly vulnerable Arctic ecosystem”, said **CT Harry, Senior Ocean Policy Analyst** at the [Environment Investigation Agency](#). “The Arctic Council must maintain strong ship emission protections in order to preserve this critically important region.”

“The [Arctic Council’s Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane](#) must set the bar high when it comes to developing reduction targets for super pollutants in the

Arctic”, said **Elissama Menezes, Director** at [Equal Routes](#). “As sea ice melts and communities experience the devastating impacts of a climate emergency they didn’t create, regional action is more critical than ever. Significant emissions reductions can be achieved by steering clear of methane based fuels for shipping, like LNG and completely switching away from heavy bunker fuels once and for all to cleaner and zero emission alternatives.”

“The Arctic’s future is the planet’s future”, said **Jase Hatcher, Senior Oceans Campaigner** at [Friends of the Earth US](#). “We cannot wait for substantive cooperation on super-pollutants like Black Carbon that have an outsized impact on the Arctic’s icy landscape or increased underwater radiated noise that threatens its marine life. We cannot tolerate false solutions that put profit over the health of the people and delicate ecosystems that the Arctic represents, nor remedies developed without true partnership and collaboration with Arctic Indigenous Peoples. Now more than ever, we need leadership with the clarity to do what is right, and the vision to ensure the Arctic is here long after we are gone.”

“Recently Iceland has been stepping up its engagement for the conservation of the [North-East Atlantic with the creation of the emission control area](#)”, said **Árni Finnsson, Board Chair** at the [Iceland Nature Conservation Association](#). “We trust the Icelandic government will take further action immediately to ban heavy fuel oil in the Arctic, and banning black carbon emissions from ships within its 12-mile territorial waters. Iceland also plays a critical role within the Arctic Council and must also show leadership in that forum on clean shipping and reducing black carbon.”

“Today more than ever, leadership on the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions by Arctic nations, Permanent Participants and Observers is essential”, said **Pam Pearson**, Director, [International Cryosphere Climate Initiative \(ICCI\)](#). “The message of the Arctic is clear: there is no negotiating with the melting point of ice, nor with the impacts of acidification of the Arctic Ocean, both the result of still-rising carbon pollution. A strong message of this physical reality from the Chair is vital on the road to COP30 and beyond.”

“The Arctic is a climate tipping point – melting ice and rising temperatures in the area affect the entire planet”, **Raija Koch, Transport Policy Officer, NABU**. “The Arctic Council has a crucial role and the capability and authority to cut super pollutants such as black carbon and methane. The world is watching, and with bold action now, the Arctic can be protected to not only preserve the local environment but also to help slow the global climate crisis and enable the future for next generations.”

“Super pollutants such as black carbon and methane pose a significant threat to ecosystems and people in the Arctic”, said **Sarah Bobbe, Senior Manager, Arctic Program** at [Ocean Conservancy](#). “They trap much more heat than carbon dioxide, even in small amounts. The good news is that solutions such as switching away from heavy fuel oil in marine shipping, to readily available cleaner alternatives, can drastically reduce black carbon overnight. By showing leadership and setting new reduction targets for black carbon emissions, the Arctic Council has a golden opportunity to reduce these pollutants and enable immediate action.”

“Leadership and action by the Arctic Council is urgently needed at this time when the Arctic is facing the triple threat of biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution”, said **Jim Gamble, Senior Director – Arctic Program** at [Pacific Environment](#). “The Arctic Council should act quickly to address the deleterious effects of pollution on sensitive Arctic ecosystems and the communities that depend on them, and especially to eliminate emissions of black carbon and other short lived climate forcers, which would have an immediate positive effect on the Arctic and the global climate.”

“Greenland stepping up as chair for the Arctic Council is the perfect opportunity to sail away from methane and black carbon emissions”, said **Anaïs Rios, Shipping Policy Officer**, [Seas At Risk](#). “The Arctic is melting – fast – and vulnerable communities are bearing the brunt of the climate crisis. The good news? Solutions exist – fitting wind assisted propulsion sails, even on existing vessels, can cut emissions and boost efficiency. The science is clear and so is the course we need to chart.”

“The Arctic is a critical ecosystem to protect, not only for those who live directly in and around it, but for the entire planet”, said **Anna Barford, Oceans Campaigner**, [Stand.Earth](#). “Now is the moment for shipping to move from laggard to leader in pollution prevention. By taking action to protect the Arctic, we lead the way in protecting the future.”

“Denmark and the Arctic Council have an incredible opportunity to reduce shipping impacts and improve ocean health”, said **Gaëlle Haut, Advocacy Coordinator**, [Surfrider Foundation Europe](#). “We call on the Arctic Council to act with responsibility by cutting black carbon emissions from shipping. Less than one month ahead of the 3rd UN Ocean conference, they can show the way.”

“Denmark has a unique chance to lead the fight against shipping’s climate impact as chair of the Arctic Council”, said **Constance Dijkstra, Shipping Manager** at [Transport and Environment](#). “A bold target on black carbon could push the EU to act and regulate a pollutant 3,000 times more warming than CO₂ in the short term. The EU and IMO have so far failed to address this issue. But if Denmark is serious about saving snow and ice, the time to act is now. The Arctic can’t wait, and neither can we.”

“With shipping activity projected to grow across Arctic waters, WWF calls on the Arctic Council to show strong leadership in addressing air and water pollution from ships—particularly black carbon emissions, which significantly accelerate the melting of snow and ice and pose serious threats to human health”, said **Elena Tracy, Senior Advisor**, [WWF Global Arctic Programme](#). “WWF urges the Council to adopt ambitious, Arctic-specific black carbon reduction targets that explicitly include the shipping sector.”

“The Arctic wildlife and communities are being disproportionately hit by the climate crisis, with the region heating four times faster than the rest of the planet”, said **Vera Pinho, Shipping Project Assistant** at [Zero](#). “Ambitious efforts by the Arctic Council to steer away from methane-based fuels and black carbon will be determinant to mitigate this challenge. Additionally, investing in short-term measures, such as wind propulsion and energy efficiency measures, will be essential to quickly slow the melting of sea ice.”

About Black Carbon and Shipping

[Black carbon](#) is “[shipping’s second largest cause of global warming](#)” after carbon dioxide and [makes up around one-fifth of international shipping’s already considerable climate impact](#). Black carbon is a *solid particulate matter* – soot – ejected by ship engines into their stacks and then into the atmosphere. This soot is a short-lived climate pollutant produced by the incomplete burning of fossil fuels in the engine combustion chambers, and has a climate warming impact more than three thousand times that of CO₂ over a 20 year period.

Black carbon is widely recognised to be a “**super pollutant**” because of the outsize impact it has on both human health and on the climate. In its recent [6th Assessment Report](#), the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) doubled the estimate of the warming potential of black carbon on snow and ice due to a better understanding of its impact. Black carbon, along with other super pollutants – methane and ozone, are responsible for nearly half of global temperature increases to date and [reducing emissions of ‘super pollutants’ would](#)

[slam emergency brake on global warming](#). In its [latest report](#), the [Clean Air Fund](#) recommends cutting black carbon emissions from shipping as quickly as possible and recognises cuts in emissions can unlock near-immediate climate gains.

Black carbon has been on the IMO's agenda for more than a decade, but it has yet to take meaningful action. Addressing the impact of black carbon on the Arctic is one of the longest, unresolved issues running at the IMO and must be dealt with without any further delay. The Clean Arctic Alliance is urging Member States to collaborate in the development of a concrete proposal, for consideration by PPR 13 in early 2026.

- [NSIDC: Arctic sea ice sets a record low maximum in 2025](#)
- Explainer: [Black Carbon and the Arctic: What is Happening, and What Comes Next?](#)
- [Infographic: How to regulate and control black carbon emissions from shipping](#)
- Op-ed: [Targeting Black Carbon and Methane at the Arctic Council](#)

About Methane and Shipping

The Arctic Council's Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane (EGBCM) [has a mandate to address both black carbon and methane](#); there is a huge urgency to address increasing [methane emissions and their impacts in the Arctic](#).

When burned by ships, [LNG releases](#) methane and other pollutants into the atmosphere. Additionally, the process of extracting, processing, and transporting of LNG results in methane leakage. These activities can also cause significant environmental impacts including habitat destruction, water pollution, and climate heating. Methane based marine fuel use, mainly the operation of LNG gas tankers, has increased in the Arctic from [zero in 2014 to vessels sailing 877.650 nautical miles in 2024](#). LNG bunkering (i.e. ports where ships can refuel) has also grown in the Arctic since 2010 to over 30 operational and proposed facilities.

Methane provides 30% of the global climate problem – and emissions are on the rise. Methane impacts are amplified in the Arctic due to melting glaciers exposing large deposits of leaking methane gas. Methane released from thawing permafrost and emitted by industrial sources have led some to describe the situation as a ticking [methane bomb](#).

The Arctic Council must take more concrete action on methane and at the very least align with the [Global Methane Pledge](#) (backed by more than 150 countries), and given the accelerated climate impacts in the Arctic aim for a higher ambition striving for reductions of 40% by 2030 from 2020 levels.

Civil society has also initiated a new framework for action on methane which should be supported and championed by all Arctic Council members, the [Beyond Methane Pledge](#) focuses on rapidly phasing out methane based Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) as a marine fuel.

We remain at the disposal of journalists for any request for information or interviews.

About Surfrider Foundation Europe

The NGO Surfrider Foundation is a collective of positive activists who take concrete action on the ground on a daily basis to pass on a preserved ocean to future generations. Our mission: To carry the voice of the Ocean loud and clear! Our weapons? Raising awareness and mobilising citizens, children and adults alike (in particular through 48 volunteer branches throughout Europe), using our scientific expertise to carry out lobbying actions and transform companies. Discover the association on <https://surfrider.eu/> or via [this video](#)

About the Clean Arctic Alliance

Made up of 24 not-for-profit organisations, the Clean Arctic Alliance campaigns to persuade governments to take action to protect the Arctic, its wildlife and its people. Members include: Alaska Wilderness League, Bellona, Clean Air Task Force, Ecology and Development Foundation ECODES, Environmental Investigation Agency, Equal Routes, Eurasian Wildlife and Peoples, Friends of the Earth US, Global Choices, Green Global Future, Green Transition Denmark, Greenpeace, Iceland Nature Conservation Association, International Cryosphere Climate Initiative, Nature And Biodiversity Conservation Union, 90 North Foundation, Ocean Conservancy, Pacific Environment, Seas At Risk, Surfrider Foundation Europe, Stand.Earth, Transport & Environment, WWF and Zero.

More more information visit <https://www.cleanarctic.org/>

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