



# International Science Initiative in the Russian Arctic (ISIRA)

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## US Representative

- Vladimir Romanovsky

## Scope

The International Science Initiative in the Russian Arctic (ISIRA) is a Russian and international cooperative initiative to assist Arctic science and sustainable development in the Russian Arctic.

ISIRA's objectives include:

- Initiating planning of multinational research programs that address specific key scientific problems in the Russian Arctic;
- Providing a forum for linking on-going or planned bilateral projects;
- Facilitating improved scientific access to the Russian Arctic;
- Advising on funding and implementation of projects.

## Critical Issues Being Discussed

- The present political situation is not instrumental in active implementation of the ISIRA's objectives
- Some developments in the Arctic Council may be encouraging (on February 28, 2024, consensus was reached for the gradual resumption of official Working Group meetings in a virtual format, enabling project-level work to further advance)
- However, the absence of Russian participants in the ISIRA meetings up to date makes the progress in achieving the ISIRA's objectives practically impossible

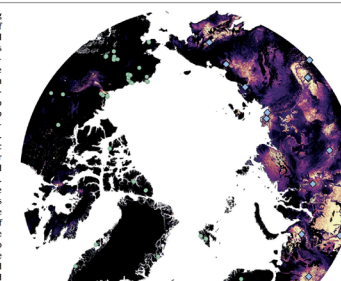
Why is it important?



### Correspondence

#### Russian collaboration loss risks permafrost carbon emissions network

While never overshadowing the dominant influence of human activities, additional greenhouse gas emissions from warming Arctic permafrost are expected to accelerate future climate change by 10–20%<sup>1,2</sup>. The Russian Federation contains two-thirds of the northern permafrost area<sup>3,4</sup> and the loss of access to permafrost carbon flux sites and data due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine threatens scientists' ability to detect this climate feedback. Scientists are working to improve the Arctic carbon flux network, by increasing the number of sites and pushing the data processing and reporting towards real-time (annual) updates. Analogous to weather monitoring, real-time methane and carbon dioxide measurements do not slow emissions, but instead provide knowledge about the speed and strength of the permafrost carbon feedback to climate change. By 2100, the Arctic is expected to release permafrost carbon with the climate impact of a large, industrialized nation, and that must be accounted for as nations around



### nature climate change

#### Brief Communication

#### Towards an increasingly biased view on Arctic change

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Check for updates

Efrén López-Blanco<sup>1,2</sup>, Elmer Topp-Jørgensen<sup>1</sup>, Torben R. Christensen<sup>1,3</sup>, Morten Rasch<sup>4</sup>, Henrik Skov<sup>5</sup>, Marie F. Arndal<sup>6</sup>, M. Sydonia Bret-Harte<sup>7</sup>, Terry V. Callaghan<sup>7,8</sup> & Niels M. Schmidt<sup>1</sup>

The Russian invasion of Ukraine hampers the ability to adequately describe conditions across the Arctic, thus biasing the view on Arctic change. Here we benchmark the pan-Arctic representativeness of the largest high-latitude research station network, INTERACT, with or without Russian stations. Excluding Russian stations lowers representativeness markedly, with some biases being of the same magnitude as the expected shifts caused by climate change by the end of the century.



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## Current Projects/Activities

- There is practically no activities within our working group at this moment
- However, there are some projects where the western scientists continue to work in or near the Russian Arctic with or without collaboration with the Russian scientists. Just to mention some:
  - NABOS
  - Siberian Distributed Biological Observatory (S-DBO)
  - Global Terrestrial Network for Permafrost (GTN-P)
  - Circum-Polar Active Layer Monitoring project (CALM)
- There is a strong desire from both sides to find the way to continue, to resume, or to establish new collaborative scientific projects in the Russian Arctic.



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## Future Directions?

- Participating in the ICARP IV process. RPT4 (International cooperation and science diplomacy) would like to take ISIRA as a case study
- There are many ideas, activities and initiatives that are in development now on both Western and Russian sides. Just some examples:



### The High North Talks

The High North Talks is one of the few remaining venues where representatives from the countries most invested in the Arctic can meet discreetly to discuss the future of the region. Participants discuss the most urgent challenges in the Arctic, devise workable solutions and communicate them to decisionmakers.

**Overview:** The Arctic, often seen as a “last frontier” in international relations due to its vast unexploited potential largely submerged under ice, is undergoing rapid transformation due to climate change, geopolitical tensions and other global trends. As the ice recedes, opportunities for resource exploitation and new trade routes emerge, alongside escalating tensions among key players like Russia, NATO countries, and China.



## Mapping a Path Forward for Arctic Cooperation with Russia: A Biodiversity Case Study

MARGARET WILLIAMS, NADEZHDA FILIMONOVA,  
JENNIFER SPENCE, AND FRAN ULMER

**It is a long and difficult conversation. Maybe PRB would like to be involved?**