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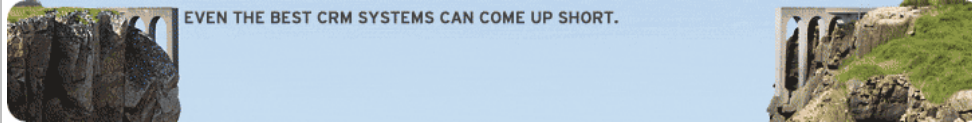
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## Arctic Could Lose Majority of Ice in 30 Years

July 13, 2009 7:44AM






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**Ice will remain along northern Canada and Greenland due to powerful winds that sweep across the Arctic Ocean, forcing ice layers to slide on top of each other, building up a very thick ice cover. The amount of the Arctic Ocean covered by ice at the end of summer by 2037 could be about one million square kilometers, compared to today's 4.6 million.**

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» A nearly ice-free Arctic Ocean in the summer may happen three times sooner than scientists had previously estimated, according to a recent NOAA study.

A new analysis of computer models coupled with the most recent summer ice measurements indicates that the Arctic might lose most of its ice cover in summer in 30 years, although they do not expect the Arctic to become totally ice free. Ice will remain along northern Canada and Greenland due to powerful winds there that sweep across the Arctic Ocean, forcing ice layers to slide on top of each other, building up a very thick ice cover.

"The Arctic is changing faster than anticipated," said James Overland of NOAA's Marine Pacific Environmental Laboratory at the University of Washington. "Ifs a combination of natural variability along with warmer air and sea conditions caused by increased greenhouse gases."

The amount of the Arctic Ocean covered by ice at the end of summer by 2037 could be about one million square kilometers, compared to today's ice extent of 4.6 million square kilometers.

The U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2007 assessed what might happen in the Arctic in the future by running 23 global climate models. But Muyin Wang and Overland reasoned that dramatic declines in the extent of ice at the end of summer in 2007 and 2008 called for a more refined approach.

The new projections are based on those six of the 23 models that are most suited for assessing sea ice, according to Wang, the lead author of the study.

She and Overland sought models that best matched what has actually happened in recent years.

Among the models eliminated were those showing way too little ice or way too much ice compared to conditions that have occurred.

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Wang says she and Overland chose models that accurately reflect the difference between summer and winter ice packs.

The pair published their findings on April 3 in Geophysical Research Letters.

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