

# A MEDICAL MASK FOR A HEALTHY WORLD

## PARVATI - FOUNDATION

With its thick ice, frigid wind, and months-long darkness, the Arctic Ocean may seem both remote and obscure. Yet in terms of its impact on our lives, this distant ocean may as well be in our back yards. Its health is inescapably connected with our own.

The Arctic Ocean is a global life support system that keeps our entire planet cool and healthy. Through what is known as the “albedo effect”, its ice reflects the sun’s heat away from the planet. The cold vortex of air above the ice shapes weather patterns for the entire world, including the temperature and rainfall patterns that grow the food and resources we need and ensure we have access to drinking water. This also protects us from natural disasters and, because it stabilizes land ice in turn, it helps safeguard our homes from rising sea levels.

But today, the Arctic Ocean is sick, and its life-giving benefits have been compromised. Its ice has vanished precipitously in the past five decades, while its waters are now as many as 4 degrees Celsius warmer than the norm. According to NASA and the National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC), the 2020 minimum sea ice extent measured just 3.74 million square kilometres



Parvati-Foundation MAPS-Mask

(1.44 million square miles). That's significantly smaller than the extent of Arctic sea ice at the beginning of the satellite record in 1979, at roughly 7 million square kilometres (2.7 million square miles).

When Arctic sea ice melts, the air above it warms up, and the nearby land begins to melt. As buried organic matter in the Arctic permafrost (on the land and under the sea) begins to thaw and decompose, it generates methane, which escapes



Parvati-Foundation MAPS Marine-Arctic-Peace-Sanctuary Arctic-Melt Photo: pxhere.com



Parvati-Foundation MAPS Marine-Arctic-Peace-Sanctuary Whale Credit-Alexey Suloev stock.adobe.com

into the atmosphere in slow seeps and sudden explosions. This greenhouse gas is 30 times more potent than carbon dioxide in capturing heat. Scientists estimate that Arctic soil contains methane equivalent to 4-5 times all the carbon dioxide humanity has emitted since 1850. A Nature study warned of the possibility that a single giant “pulse” of 50 gigatons of methane could be released into the atmosphere at once with an economic impact of \$60 trillion, undermining the global financial system.

There is also a Pandora’s box of pathogens buried beneath Arctic ice, such as anthrax, smallpox, Spanish flu and the plague, as well as other pathogens for which humanity has no name, let alone immunity. They stand to be released as the ice melts. Scientists have proven that frozen Arctic viruses as old as 30,000 years can be reactivated. The warning shot was fired in 2016, when an anthrax outbreak was traced to the frozen carcass of a reindeer that thawed in the summer heat. It tore through a herd of 2000 reindeer, took the life of a 12-year-old-boy, and required the hospitalization of dozens of others. If this trend continues, infections from time immemorial could re-emerge to devastate a world no longer immune.

When a cough in one market can fill hospitals around the world, our interconnection has never been clearer. However, many do not yet comprehend the danger to all life of an unprotected Arctic Ocean. Today, this precarious and vulnerable ecosystem is under threat like never before and its deterioration is already creating a ripple effect of suffering worldwide. As its ice vanishes, it has become subject to exploitation of all kinds—fishing, oil and

gas, shipping, military activity, and more—from businesses and governments seeking to profit off the thaw. Since such activities break up the remaining ice and disrupt an already unstable ecosystem, the risks to us all include increased pollution, species loss locally and globally, rising warming, greater natural disasters, and the deadly release of methane and pathogens.

Today, most of us understand that a medical mask keeps disease contained—either from getting in, or from getting out. What if we could apply a medical mask to the Arctic Ocean to keep life on Earth safe? With MAPS, the Marine Arctic Peace Sanctuary, we can. MAPS protects the entire Arctic Ocean north of the Arctic Circle from all forms of exploitation and militarization. It is by far the largest conservation area in history, at eight million square km, or approximately the same size as the contiguous USA.

MAPS also brings world leaders together to affirm long-term collective good over short-term individual greed. MAPS keeps an estimated 90 billion barrels of oil buried in the seabed, preventing a drastic increase in global emissions and catalyzing the global shift off fossil fuels to renewable energies. It also provides us with clean air, because it gives shelter and food to 17 different species of whales, three of which live there year-round.

In the “whale pump effect”, whales bring nutrients from the ocean depths to fertilize phytoplankton at the ocean’s surface, which capture carbon out of the air. Ocean phytoplankton are responsible for half the oxygen we breathe, or every other breath.



Parvati-Foundation Melting-Permafrost



Parvati-Foundation MAPS Marine-Arctic-Peace-Sanctuary Arctic-Melt U.S. Geological Survey-Public Domain

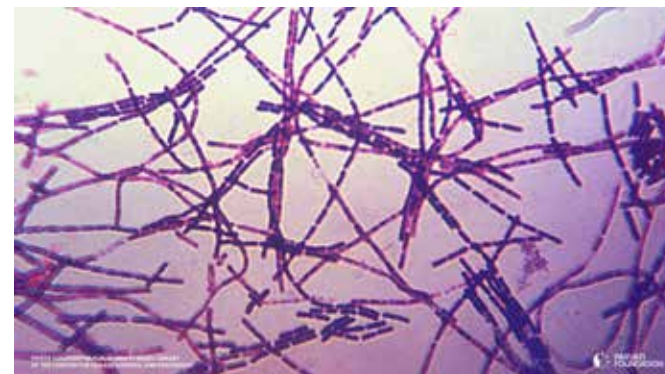
**DR. ROGER PAYNE  
PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER OF  
OCEAN ALLIANCE**

“Everything we do that heats up the Earth heats up the Arctic much faster. Everything we break or spill in the Arctic takes the Arctic vastly longer to recover from. Arctic permafrost is about to thaw which will release much of its staggering quantity of CO2 and methane, which will make things hotter, which will thaw more permafrost, which will release yet greater amounts of methane and CO2, which will make things hotter still, and so on—a feedback loop that’s a race to oblivion. MAPS will slow this process. Back in 1961 we banned exploitation and resource extraction in the Antarctic. Let’s all get behind MAPS and save the Arctic to save the world.”

**CAPTAIN PAUL WATSON  
FOUNDER OF SEA SHEPHERD**

“The Marine Arctic Peace Sanctuary must continue to hold the massive reserves of restless methane within its quiet lonely bosom where sleeping viruses remain safely captive.

From the dark boreal forests to the groaning of the shifting floes, there is the constant whispering reminder that this stark and desolate world is the key to our survival.”



Parvati-Foundation Anthrax

By removing ships that break up the ice and whose dark soot lands on ice and accelerates the thaw, MAPS preserves the vital ecosystem that stabilizes the planet. By stopping commercial and military activity in the region, MAPS keeps harmful behavior and pollutants out of the Arctic Ocean for a more peaceful, healthy world. In short, it protects the Arctic Ocean from the symptoms of our isolationist thinking, and protects the world from the symptoms of a sick Arctic Ocean. As we all come to terms with the need to wear masks to keep ourselves and others safe in the COVID-19 pandemic, MAPS is an essential medical mask for an ailing world.

MAPS originated with the all-volunteer international charity Parvati Foundation. Parvati Foundation supports a healthy world by helping people remember our inherent interconnection. Its team includes world leaders, renowned humanitarians, scientific luminaries, environmental heroes, media moguls, and compassionate citizens from around the world.



Parvati-Foundation MAPS Marine-Arctic-Peace-Sanctuary Polar-Bear Photo: Mario Hoppmann stock.adobe.com

Parvati Foundation is leading the realization of MAPS through the Marine Arctic Peace Sanctuary Treaty that updates the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Two countries have already signed the MAPS Treaty. With the signatures of 99 world leaders of UN member states, the entire Arctic Ocean above the Arctic Circle will be protected forever from exploitation. Securing the Treaty signatures at the necessary speed is supported by an international petition, country-specific petitions, as well as GEM: Global Education for MAPS, which harnesses the power of modern media with music, words and visuals to awaken interconnection and generate the international momentum of an unstoppable call from citizens and world leaders alike.

For years, Nature has been sending us increasing warning signs that we need to change our ways. With COVID-19 serving as an urgent reminder that we are all interconnected—that the actions of the one affect the whole—it is clear we must change at an unprecedented speed in order to survive. To protect our collective future, we must put the Arctic Ocean in quarantine now. We must commit immediately to honouring our interconnection and realizing the Marine Arctic Peace Sanctuary. In essence, the Arctic Ocean has always been an internationally protected area because of its year-round frozen seascape. It is still one of the most pristine regions on Earth. It must always remain so. Everyone has the right to know that the Arctic Ocean affects us all and that a healthy world is possible when we protect it. To get involved, please visit [Parvati.org](http://Parvati.org).

Parvati Foundation  
Vandana Erin Ryder, General Counsel, [vandana@parvati.org](mailto:vandana@parvati.org)