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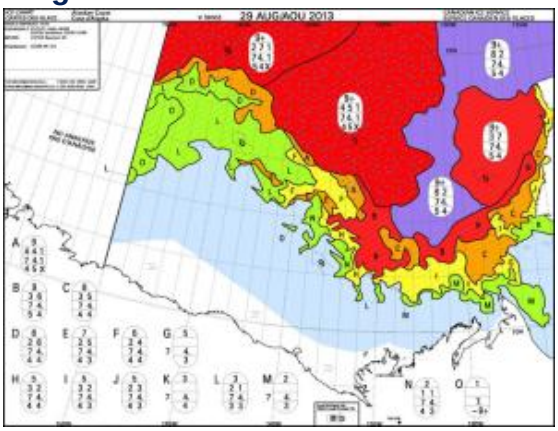
# Beaufort Gyre Exploration Project: Dispatch 31: A Closing Note from the Chief Scientist

Bill Williams
September 1, 2013

We are now just offshore of Kugluktuk and in the midst of a gale: 35kt winds. These are the first strong winds we have had and I hope they blow through before we disembark tomorrow.

Our expedition to the Beaufort Gyre has been very different this year compared to last: there is a lot of sea ice this year where last year there was none. These two ice charts for the end of August show what a difference there is. At the beginning of our expedition, we steamed over vast areas of almost melted ice in the south and west of our study region. This ice had many holes in it and we made good progress using only two of the ship's 5 engines. Later on in our expedition, in the north and east, the ice was thicker and older with few leads between the floes. There were times we needed all 5 of the ship's engines to make good progress.

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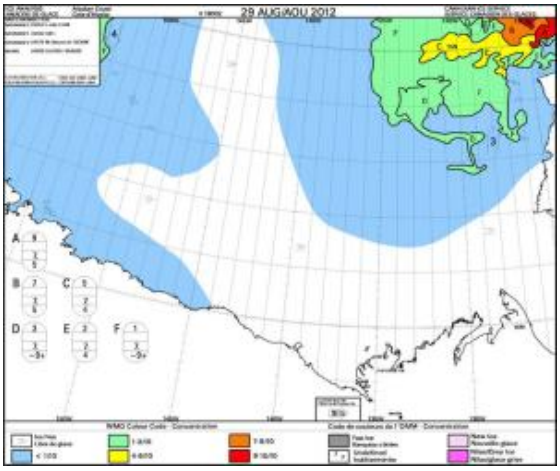
(Bill Williams)

Strangely, the wind may be the reason for the difference in the ice in our corner of the Arctic Ocean. In spring and mid-summer this year there were unusual westerly winds which likely kept the sea ice compressed against the islands of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago and thus kept the midsummer sunshine from entering the ocean, warming it, and melting ice.

It was also interesting that we had quite cold temperatures this year during the expedition and, rather than seeing continued melting of ice, we saw new ice forming on meltponds and in leads and dustings of new snow often covered the ice.

Each year we head out into the Beaufort Gyre, it is always different to the last: there is large year to year variation on top of the general decline of Arctic sea ice. I look forward to what next year will bring.

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