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Beaufort Gyre Exploration Project: Dispatch 1: Summer's Over

Rick Krishfield
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Today begins the 2010 Joint Ocean Ice Study (JOIS) cruise (including our BGOS program) on the Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker Louis S. St. Laurent. Scientists and ship's personnel from the US, Canada, and Japan converged in the early afternoon in Kugluktuk, Nunavut (Canada) to embark on the ship. Blowing snow showers greeted the group, reminding them that summer is already over where they are going (see map for the planned cruise track).

Many of us scientists are old friends, having enjoyed the hospitality of the Louis for a number of years since this joint collaborative program began earlier this decade. While waiting in the airport for our helicopter ride to the ship, which is anchored a short distance offshore, we get reacquainted with each other, and to members of the departing officers and crew of the Louis who we sailed with last year, and are also in the small airport terminal awaiting their flight home after their 6 week stint.

By dinner time, helicopter pilot Chris Swannell has transported everyone and their luggage to the Louis, and we all settle into our accommodations for the next 4 weeks. In the early evening we muster for a lifeboat drill so that we are prepared for departure. Shortly thereafter, the anchor is weighed and we're off – heading west then north to the Beaufort Sea to continue our investigations of the changing climate of the western Arctic Ocean.

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Mail: Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, 266 Woods Hole Road, Woods Hole, MA 02543, USA.
E-Contact: info@whoi.edu; press relations: media@whoi.edu, tel. (508) 457-2000
Problems or questions about the site, please contact webdev@whoi.edu