

Arctic Cap Nowcast Forecast System (ACNFS) End of Summer 2012 Ice Extent Projection

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2012 Sea Ice Outlook – September Report based on August Data

Executive Summary

The ACNFS outlook for September ice extent is $4.41 \text{ Mkm}^2 \pm 0.4 \text{ Mkm}^2$.

The skill of the Arctic Cap model run in forward mode for a season is not yet quantified.

Rationale

The Arctic Cap Nowcast Forecast System (ACNFS) was run in forward model mode, without assimilation, initialized with a August 1, 2012 analysis, for nine simulations using archived Navy atmospheric forcing fields from 2003-2011. The mean ice extent in September, averaged across all ensemble members, is our projected ice extent. The standard deviation across the ensemble mean ice extents is an estimate of the uncertainty of our projection given we do not know the atmospheric conditions that will occur this summer. Please note, this is a developmental model that has not been fully validated in non-assimilative mode, but the assimilative system has been validated to provide an accurate ice forecast [Posey et al. 2010].

Introduction

The ACNFS, developed by the Oceanography Division of the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL), is a ~3.5 km coupled ice-ocean model, with assimilation of passive microwave ice concentration, which has been developed to produce 5 day forecasts of the Arctic sea ice state. Currently this system is being transitioned to operational use at the Naval Oceanographic Office. The system is configured, and validated, for its capability in producing an accurate 5 day sea ice forecast. The results presented in this report come with a 'health warning' that they are preliminary and additional work is required in validating the capability of this model for seasonal projections.

The Arctic Cap Nowcast-Forecast System

The ACNFS ocean component is the HYbrid Coordinate Ocean Model (HYCOM) [Metzger et al. 2010], and is coupled to the Los Alamos National Laboratory Community Ice Code (CICE) [Hunke and Lipscomb 2008] via the Earth System Modeling Framework (ESMF). The ocean and ice models are run in an assimilative cycle with the Navy Coupled Ocean Data Assimilation

(NCODA) system [Cumming 2005]. The system is run once per day, assimilating SSM/I ice concentration into CICE to provide an initial condition for a 5 day forward model run (the forecast). Atmospheric forcing is provided by the Navy Operational Global Atmospheric Prediction System (NOGAPS) [Hogan et al. 1991]. For more information on the system and its performance please read Posey et al. [2010].

Ensemble Model Runs for End of Summer Projection

Our seasonal projection was made using an ensemble of forward model simulations. Nine model runs were made, using the Navy Operational Global Atmospheric Prediction System (NOGAPS) forcing from 2003 through 2011. Each model run was initialized with an assimilative ACNFS analysis field from August 1, 2012 (Fig. 1), and run forward for 2 months from August 1 for each specific year. This ensemble of nine members gives an indication of how sea ice can respond to variable atmospheric conditions during summer.

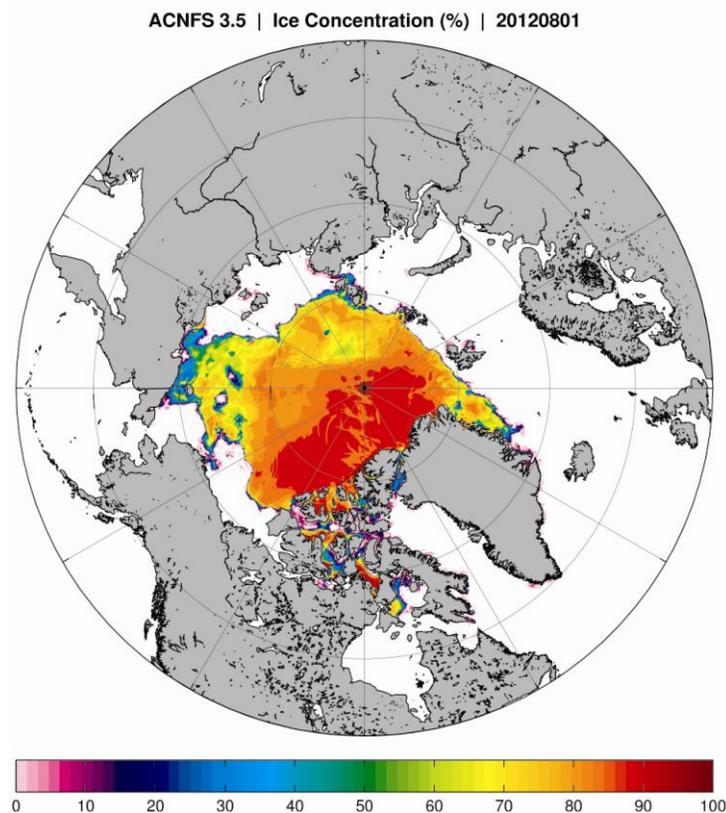


Figure 1: Ice concentration field, from ACNFS analysis of August 1, 2012. This is the initial condition for each ensemble member.

Figure 2 shows examples of ice concentration for two ensemble members. Ice extent was calculated as the area of all grid cells with at least 15% ice area. We averaged this extent over every day in the month of September. As can be seen in Fig. 3, there is a spread in September ice extents between ensemble members. The mean of these values is our projected ice extent for September 2012.

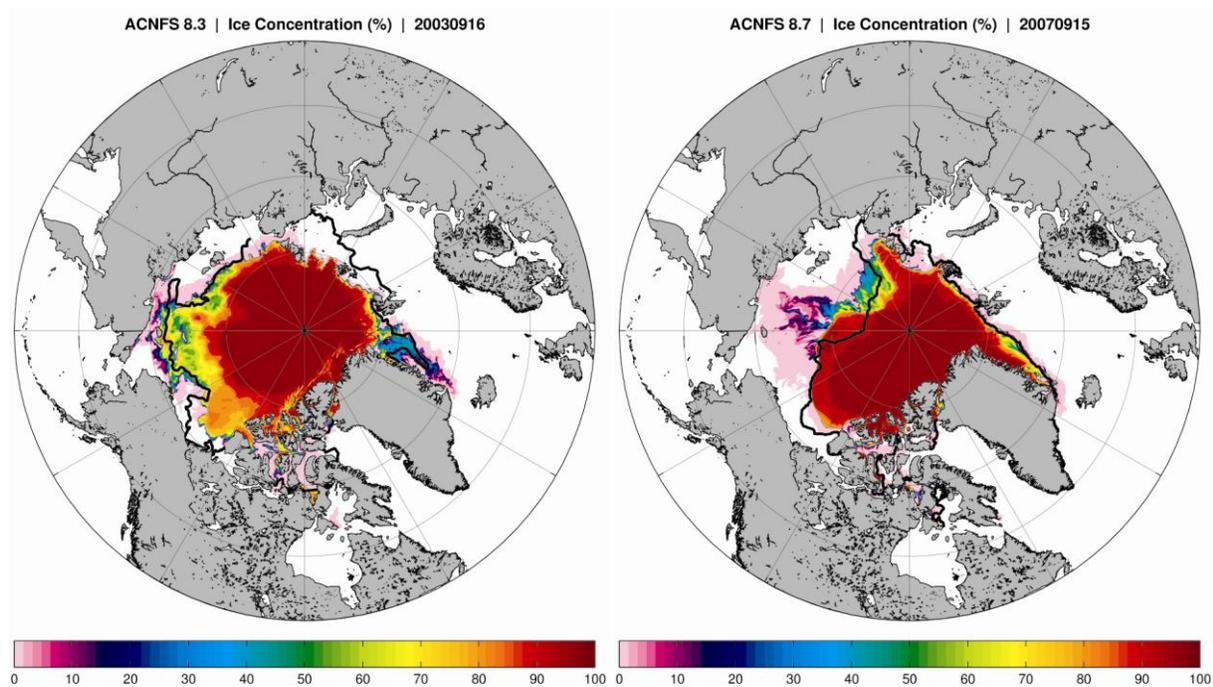


Figure 2: ACNFS ensemble ice concentration nominally on September 16, 2003 (left) and September 15, 2007 (right). The black line on the figures is the ice edge provided in real time, i.e. in 2003 and 2007, by the National Ice Center for these actual days. These two simulations have the maximum and minimum projected ice extents out of the nine ensemble members.

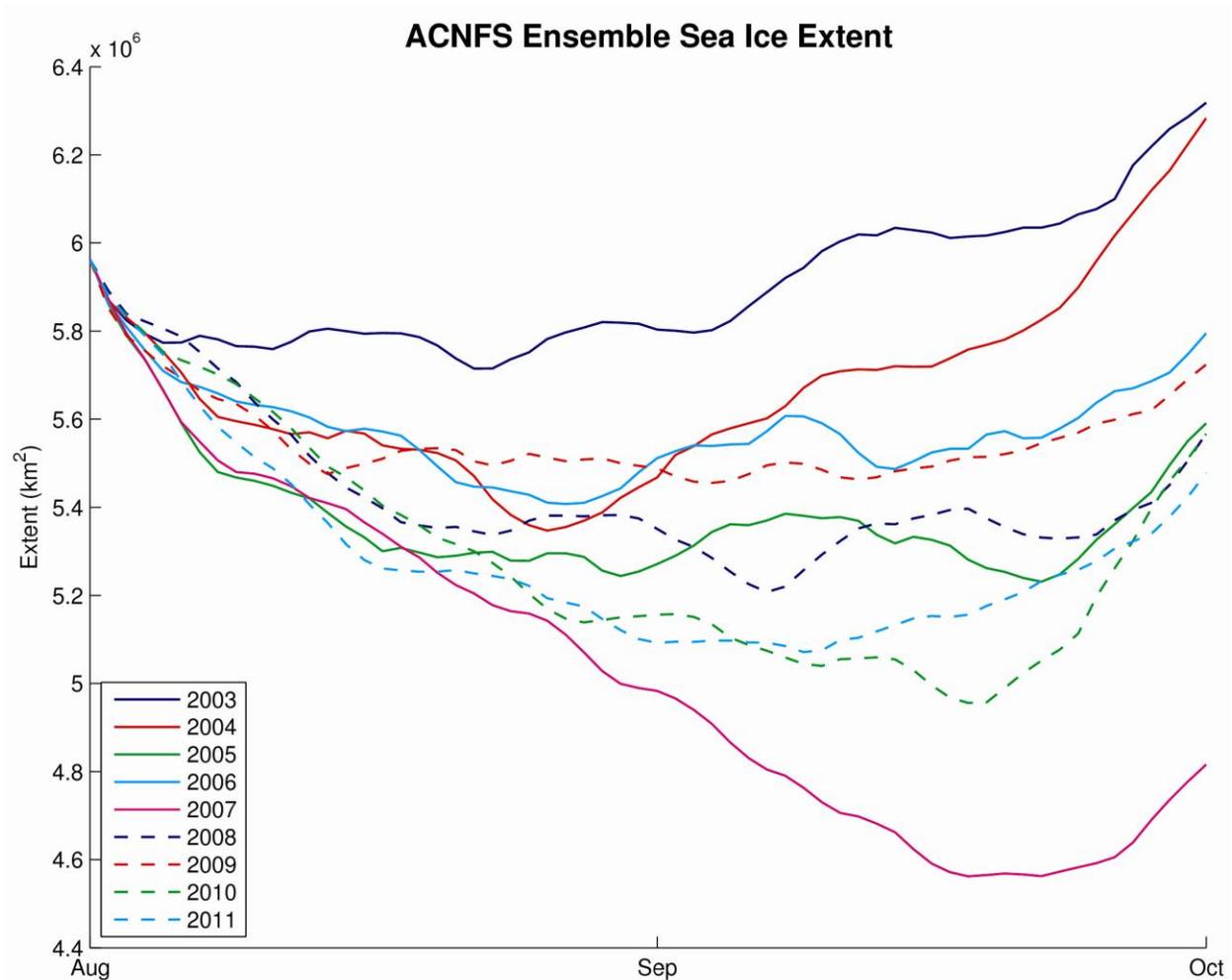


Figure 3: Time series of ice extent for each ensemble member.

Ice extent averaged across all ensemble members during September is 5.39 Mkm^2 , with a standard deviation of 0.4 Mkm^2 . The ensemble appears to be doing a reasonable job of reproducing variability due to uncertainty in atmospheric forcing. The extent estimate, however, is high. We attribute the model bias to biases in the atmospheric forcing. We have applied a bias correction to our outlook to account for this bias. As ACNFS has been run in assimilative mode since Fall 2007, we can use the analysis fields from the assimilative run to identify forward model biases in mean September ice extent. The ACNFS has demonstrated good skill at predicting ice extent, hence it is reasonable to use the assimilative run analysis fields as ‘truth’ for our bias correction estimate. We performed a set of control runs for 2008 through 2011, using the August 1 analysis for initial conditions. Comparing the control runs mean September ice extent to ACNFS analysis mean September ice extent we estimate the forward model bias is -0.98 Mkm^2 .

Subtracting this bias produces our September 2012 mean ice extent estimate of 4.41 +/- 0.4 Mkm².

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