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THE INTERNATIONAL BATHYMETRIC CHART OF THE ARCTIC OCEAN (IBCAO): AN IMPROVED MORPHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR OCEANOGRAPHIC INVESTIGATIONS

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The IBCAO initiative set out in late 1997 to assemble and merge all available bathymetric observations from northern regions, with the intent of constructing a reliable and up-to-date portrayal of the Arctic seabed in digital and printed form. In early 2000, a provisional grid and map were placed in circulation for public review and comment. Available for free downloading from a website hosted by the U.S. National Geophysical Data Center, these products won immediate acceptance from a broad spectrum of Arctic investigators who recognized the potential worth of the new information in a variety of applications ranging from straightforward map production to analysing the influence of underwater topography on ocean circulation. At the same time, error reports and new data sets were being forwarded to the creators of IBCAO, so that by the middle of 2002 a new and more definitive grid was ready to be placed into circulation. This was soon followed by the construction of a prototype shaded relief map that has been proposed as a successor to Sheet 5.17 of the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO).

This presentation will introduce the new IBCAO grid and map, and will review the features that make these products particularly useful for oceanographic and climatological investigations.

