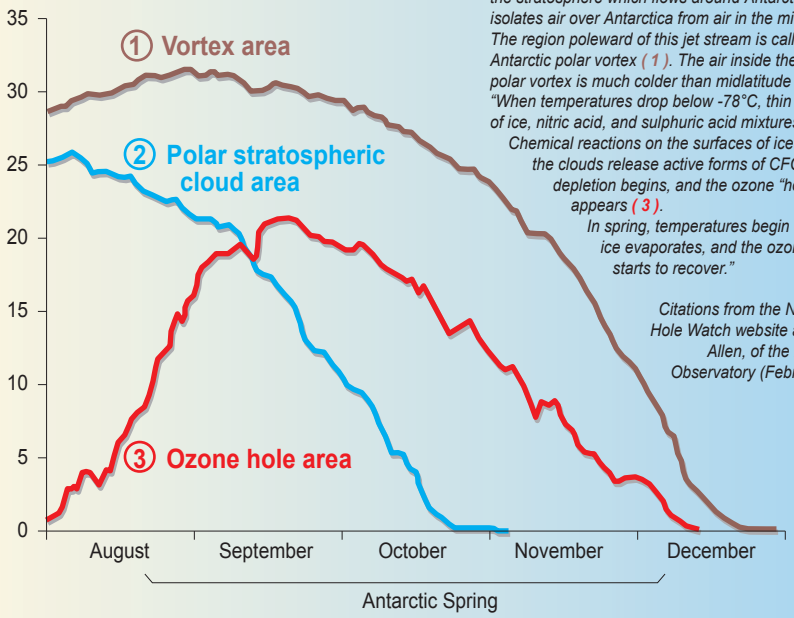
THE "HOLE": A RESULT OF SPECIAL WEATHER CONDITIONS OVER THE POLE REPEATED EVERY SPRING

Average areas between 1995 and 2004

Million square kilometres



"The Antarctic continent is circled by a strong wind in the stratosphere which flows around Antarctica and isolates air over Antarctica from air in the midlatitudes. The region poleward of this jet stream is called the Antarctic polar vortex (1). The air inside the Antarctic polar vortex is much colder than midlatitude air."

"When temperatures drop below -78°C, thin clouds form of ice, nitric acid, and sulphuric acid mixtures (2). Chemical reactions on the surfaces of ice crystals in the clouds release active forms of CFCs. Ozone depletion begins, and the ozone "hole" appears (3).

In spring, temperatures begin to rise, the ice evaporates, and the ozone layer starts to recover."

Citations from the NASA Ozone Hole Watch website and Jeannie Allen, of the NASA Earth Observatory (February 2004).

Source: US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), 2006.

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