



XXXIII Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting  
3<sup>rd</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2010

Punta del Este - Uruguay

Agenda Item: ATCM 11, CEP  
6b  
Presented by: IAATO  
Original: English

## **Non-IAATO Tourism and Visitation in Antarctica**



# Non-IAATO Tourism and Visitation in Antarctica

## Information Paper submitted by IAATO

### Summary

The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) welcomes the initiative proposed in ATCM XXXIII WP 52 (UK/USA) *Data Collection and Reporting on Yachting Activity in Antarctica* to improve records and reporting of non-IAATO yacht activities. IAATO operators encounter non-IAATO tourism and visitation at sites each season, particularly around the Peninsula area, where a proportion of those involved are either unaware or unwilling to follow ATCM guidelines or best practices. Aware of the importance of ensuring that high standards of visitation are maintained across the board, IAATO has put in place initiatives to lessen this problem including educational outreach to promote awareness and, when serious incidents occur, reporting information to appropriate National Authorities. IAATO would welcome advice from ATCM on both the usefulness of these efforts and on any additional work that can be undertaken to improve the outreach and education regarding non-IAATO tourism and visitation.

### Introduction

IAATO welcomes the initiative proposed in ATCM XXXIII WP 52 (UK/USA) *Data Collection and Reporting on Yachting Activity in Antarctica* to improve records and reporting of yacht activities and notes the incident discussed in ATCM XXXIII WP25 *Report of an incident at Wordie House (HSM No. 62)*. IAATO yacht operators have provided, and will continue to provide information on their activities annually.

Each season, IAATO operators encounter non-IAATO tourism and visitation at sites within Antarctica. Although these visitors originate from different sources, the majority are yacht-based activities that vary from private, one-off expeditions to commercial charters. While some of these yacht-based tourism activities are authorized by Treaty Parties, an estimated 50% appear to be un-authorized. Those private expedition visits that have gone through an authorization process with a Treaty Party have often learned from the process and strive to operate in a responsible fashion, particularly when that authorization process is detailed and incorporates safety and contingency planning.

While many of the interactions with non-IAATO tourism and visitation are positive, without incident or only require minimal communication and coordination, other encounters are less straightforward. In some instances, these non-IAATO operators or visitors simply lack awareness of the ATCM requirements, recommendations and guidelines intended for visitors. These issues often can be resolved easily through dialogue. However, each season there are usually a number of other encounters that prove more difficult to manage effectively, particularly where conduct is resulting in actual harm to the environment, wildlife disturbance or damage to historic artefacts.

### Current mechanisms employed by IAATO

To date, IAATO has focused its initiatives to resolve issues such as these in two ways: outreach and education prior to departure, and reporting of serious issues to the appropriate National Authorities (normally the authorizing Party of the IAATO operator and/or the Party of the nationals or vessel registry of the non-IAATO visitors).

In terms of outreach and education, as reported in ATCM XXX IP110 *IAATO Information Outreach to Private One-Off Non-Member Expeditions*, IAATO developed a one-off yacht information package that aims to provide one-off private yachts with the necessary package of information for operating safely and in an environmentally responsible fashion in Antarctica. In addition, the paper also detailed a series of posters on Recommendation XVIII-1, Marine Wildlife Watching Guidelines and Boot and Clothing Decontamination Procedures that were distributed to yacht departure points for display.

The success of these initiatives has been mixed. Each season one or two yachts sign up for the yacht package and while the posters may have been displayed in the past, many have unfortunately disappeared.

With respect to reporting serious issues to the appropriate National Authorities, this has, on the whole, been welcomed. For example, a number of serious issues that have taken place on Deception Island over several seasons have resulted in an almost immediate follow-up from the Deception Island Management Group, enabling the reporting IAATO operator to see the action taken. However, where for either legal or administrative reasons it has proved not possible or viable to follow through with any real pressure on those involved in reported incidents, it is subsequently difficult for IAATO operators to know whether they should continue to make such reports, bearing in mind that it is possible they would come across the same groups of non-IAATO visitors again in the future.

### ***Possible future initiatives***

IAATO's responsible tour operators appreciate the support of their National Authorities in ensuring that their operations are safeguarded against the actions and impacts that arise from less-careful visitation. While the IAATO yacht community will continue to make efforts in outreach and education (for example through articles in yachting magazines or providing information at gateway ports), IAATO is keen to work with Treaty Parties to work towards minimizing the potential and implications of such incidents. For example:

- IAATO would welcome any advice or feedback on the current outreach initiatives;
- IAATO would welcome the opportunity to work with the ATCM to extend education and outreach;
- IAATO would also be pleased to work with Treaty Parties regarding the most appropriate mechanism for reporting of incidents, if the ATCM would find this useful.