



XXXIV ANTARCTIC TREATY CONSULTATIVE MEETING - BUENOS AIRES JUNE 20TH - JULY 1ST, 2011

Agenda Item:	ATCM 10
Presented by:	IAATO
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Towards an IAATO Enhanced Observer Scheme

Attachments:

atcm34_att077_e.doc - Appendix 1 IAATO Member Internal Review Scheme
 atcm34_att078_e.doc -Appendix 2 IAATO Member External Review Mechanism
 atcm34_att079_e.doc -Appendix 3 IAATO Observer Report Form ship based w landings 2011
 atcm34_att080_e.doc -Appendix 4 IAATO Observer Report Form Cruise Only 2011
 atcm34_att081_e.doc -Appendix 5 IAATO Observer Report Form Land 2011

Towards An IAATO Enhanced Observer Scheme

Background

During the last decade ATCM considered the value of developing an accreditation scheme for tourism activities in Antarctica. IAATO participated in those discussions, noting the confidence such a scheme would give to the organisation that 'we are doing what we say we are doing'. While the discussions on accreditation stumbled over issues such as administration and transparency – issues that still pose conundrums -- IAATO has endeavoured to review its framework of procedures and continues to work towards building a robust set of mechanisms that work towards giving the organisation the confidence in its systems. One such example of a building block was the IAATO online staff training and assessment scheme (ATCM XXXIII IP025 *IAATO Online Field Staff Assessment & Logbook*). During the period 2010-11, IAATO has continued to develop the Online Field Staff Assessment and Training, and in addition has started to work on enhancing the current IAATO observer scheme.

IAATO Observer Scheme: Current Practice

Currently membership of IAATO involves a two-stage process for operators. Stage one is a desktop review of the operator's activities, including a preliminary review by the IAATO Membership Committee and subsequent vote by Members. This grants applicants Associate status within the organisation. Stage two, for those operators who want to move from Associate status to Member status, requires in most cases¹ for the operator to carry an independent IAATO observer. The observer report is submitted to the Members, an opportunity for a question and answer session ensues, and subsequently there is a vote by the Members. However, having gone through that observation process once, there is no formal commitment for additional observations at periodic intervals during the operators Membership period. It is only specific instances, on a case-by-case basis, that an operator is subsequently requested by IAATO to carry an observer (e.g. GAP Expeditions following the loss of the MS *Explorer*, Quark Expeditions for their Marathon program).

While this system has proved broadly effective in the past, it was agreed by the Members that there was scope to strengthen the system as this would not only provide Members with re-assurance that all are following the same high standards but also provide individual operators the opportunity to get feedback on their activity and ensure a better understanding of individual programs and how they fit in to the wider scheme.

Towards an Enhanced Observer Scheme

At IAATO 21 (Torino, June 21-24, 2010) it was agreed that the IAATO Membership, Bylaws and Accreditation Committees would develop a three-part process to provide review mechanisms, internal and external which can be used to develop an Enhanced Observer Scheme. It was understood that the scheme must be practical and justifiable, not overly burdensome for the operator, strictly within the remit of IAATO while relevant to Treaty requirements and not duplication other regulatory inspections. The three-part process comprises:

- *An Internal Review Checklist* (to be completed annually by all operators). The aim of this process is to provide Operators with a mechanism for internal confirmation that they are working to IAATO requirements;
- *An External Review Checklist* (to be completed on a to-be-determined basis). The aim of this review is to provide Operators with a standardized mechanism to show that their annual paperwork is fulfilling IAATO requirements and also to provide operators with a mechanism for feedback on their annual paperwork submissions;

¹ Currently, yacht operators are not required to carry an observer.

- *A Field Observation* (to be completed on a to-be-determined basis). The aim of this process is to provide operators with an independent review of their field operations, including a mechanism for feedback and to provide IAATO with a ‘confidence measure’ of operators’ standards.

Potentially an award or badge system can be applied to some or all of the review mechanisms.

At IAATO 22 (Hobart, 9-12 May 2011) the mechanics of the three parts were tabled. These are available as Appendix 1-5 of this paper. In addition a preliminary review of the resource implications were tabled and additional policy and application issues that still need to be defined were highlighted.

The following was agreed:

- The three field observer checklists (1. traditional vessel-based with landings, 2. Cruise only operations and 3. Land activities) were adopted and will be used as a basis for any IAATO observer activities going forward, irrespective of the enhance observer scheme.
- Several Members volunteered to go through the internal and external review process. For this pilot stage, the emphasis will be to assess the system and provide feedback on the process.
- The IAATO Membership, Accreditation and Bylaws Committees will consider the outstanding policy and application issues related to the program. These considerations include:
 - Should there be an award/badge system that operators can use to note that they have gone through this process? If doing so, does there need to be additional demonstrable independence?
 - To what extent should confidentiality feature within the process?
 - Should the internal review checklists be filed with IAATO annually?
 - To what extent can the External review process replace a field observation process (e.g. for yachts etc.)?
 - How often should the External Review and the Field Observation review process take place?
 - Should IAATO cover the travel expenses of the observers or should the Member?
 - Would the current criteria for observers hold strong for this process or should a dedicated team of observers be developed, who have been trained accordingly?
 - Who pays for what? To what extent should financial responsibility be on the Member being reviewed or observed or spread across the Membership?

Conclusion

IAATO remains committed to developing the building blocks for an accreditation scheme both for the Associations internal robustness and integrity but also to ensure transparency and accountability. In addition, IAATO would welcome any feedback from ATCM on these either the content or approach taken with developing these building blocks going forward.