



XLI ANTARCTIC TREATY  
CONSULTATIVE MEETING  
BUENOS AIRES - ARGENTINA  
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Argentina,  
IAATO, ASOC  
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## Review of Site Guidelines for Visitors



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***Working Paper submitted by the United Kingdom and Argentina (in conjunction with the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators and Antarctic Southern Ocean Coalition)***

### **Summary**

An overarching paper describing the work conducted by the UK, Argentina, IAATO and ASOC this season to review of a number of sites with either established Site Guidelines for visitors or sites currently receiving regular visitation in order to draft new guidelines. It recommends that the CEP: notes the importance of regular reviews of existing site guidelines for visitors and the need to increase the number of sites with guidelines; adds regular site guideline reviews to its five-year work plan; approves the concept of precautionary revision, even when the site has not been visited; approve the proposal to adopt a formal checklist to aid the reviewers; and approves a minor amendment to the guidelines for Half Moon Island.

### **Introduction**

Between the 7 -13 February 2018 representatives of the UK, Argentina, IAATO and ASOC conducted a review of a number of sites with established Site Guidelines for visitors as well as a number of sites currently receiving regular visitation in order to draft new guidelines (if deemed appropriate).

### **Sites Visited**

Existing sites - Brown Bluff<sup>1</sup>, Devil Island, Paulet Island, Pendulum Cove, Telefon Bay and Whalers Bay.

New Sites – Astrolabe Island, Georges Point, Rongé Island and Portal Point.

The team also visited the area around the wreck of the former Norwegian whaling ship the *Gouvernøren I*. The review team identified the site as appropriate for a new set of site guidelines, focusing largely on zodiac cruising and yacht visits. However, the team did not land on the island and there remain a number of outstanding matters of detail to resolve. We do not therefore intend to propose guidelines at this meeting but will work toward doing so at ATCM XLII.

The team also circumnavigated Gourdin Island but did not land and intend to conduct further work on proposed site guidelines for this site.

The co-sponsors also propose a precautionary revision to the site guidelines for Half Moon Island, based on information received from IAATO and scientists visiting the site. This is due to fledging penguins on the path to the eastern tip of the island, especially in the narrow pass.

The map for the site is in the process of being revised to follow this change in the guidelines. The team would recommend that a formal review the site take place next season.

### **Overall findings of the review**

The review team was pleased that there were very few sites with any visible signs of impacts from visitors. Where there were impacts they were minor and transitory, whereby the management measures should continue to be applied so that the impact is not increased. Those sites with existing site guidelines largely still reflected the information presented in those guidelines, although some required more amendment than others, especially those that had not been reviewed in some time and where concentrations of wildlife across

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<sup>1</sup> Monte Barbas Coloradas, for the Argentine toponymy.

the site would have shifted, but it should be supported by scientific evidence. The team decided it was necessary to amend the guidelines of all the sites visited, including some substantial changes and some presentational to aid with consistency. For many of the guidelines significant changes were required to the maps in particular.

After several years of gradual and even insignificant growth, and having observed a recent growth that is expected to continue increasing in tourism to the Antarctic Peninsula, the co-sponsors consider that the number of sites with guidelines for visitors should continue to be monitored and increased, giving maximum priority in the work of the CEP.

As an increasing number of sites are visited and activity spreads out across the peninsula the review team felt it was appropriate to immediately propose new guidelines for all but one of the new sites visited. All the new sites visited had over 1000 visitors in the 2016/17 season, with the exception of Astrolabe Island.

### **Future Actions**

It is not the intention of this paper to propose new processes or procedures in relation to Site guidelines due to the shortened nature of the meeting. Nevertheless, the cosponsors felt it important to reflect on the overarching findings of the review team in this paper and signal our intention to return to this matter in 2019. Many of the overall findings build on those presented in *ATCM XXIX WP2 Policy Issues Arising from On-Site Review of Guidelines for Visitor Sites in the Antarctic Peninsula* and *ATCM XXXVI WP15 Policy Issues Arising from the 2013 On-Site Review of Guidelines for Visitor Sites in the Antarctic Peninsula*. They also note the ongoing work to address the recommendations of the 2012 CEP Tourism Study, including work on site sensitivity.

Suggested actions from the review team:

- Site guidelines should be reviewed more regularly, in the same way that Antarctic Specially Protected Areas (ASPAs) shall be initiated at least every five years, the review team felt that a similar timescale should be adopted for site guidelines, given the sites are subject to a more intense anthropic activity. The cosponsors would urge Parties to carry out reviews on a regular basis.
- As with the revision we have proposed to the guidelines for Half Moon Island there is no need to wait for a formal review before amending an established guidelines. If information is received that some element of the site has changed and that for health and safety or environmental protection reasons the guidelines need to be amended, then a precautionary approach should be adopted (decrease the number of visits, close one or several areas of the site based on the evidence) and the guidelines revised for consideration by the CEP at the earliest opportunity. A formal review of the site by the Party in question should then be conducted when possible.
- To make the process of reviewing a site or to facilitate the assessment of a new site, the cosponsors would suggest that the CEP adopt a formal checklist to aid the reviewers. The cosponsors intend to work with past Site Guideline review teams/parts to produce such as checklist for consideration at CEP XXII.
- Similarly, a formal template should be produced to ensure consistency and aid in the production of new guidelines. A standard style of guidelines has developed in recent years and a formally adopted template would follow this pattern. The review team would suggest that such template include the recommendations adopted in WP 15/ XXXVI ATCM “Policy Issues Arising from the 2013 On-Site Review of Guidelines for Visitor Sites in the Antarctic Peninsula” such as the date the guidelines were last adopted/reviewed at the top.
- The cosponsors suggest that an online repository of pictures from sites with visitor guidelines should be maintained to aid in the i) ongoing monitoring and ii) formal site review. Expedition staff and National Programme members would be encouraged to take pictures from certain established positions at the site at different times in the season and from year to year to achieve a more complete

picture than the snapshot obtained during a single visit. IAATO have kindly volunteered to host such an online repository in the first instance and encourage their field guides to take part. This will allow the CEP to assess whether this would be a worthwhile tool and whether such a repository should be hosted going forward on the Secretariat website.

- The reviewers noted the imposition of curfew periods at some sites for 6 hours over night. It would be useful for SCAR to advise on whether such rest periods are helpful, and if so whether 6 hours is a suitable length of time.
- Finally, the cosponsors would remind Parties that site guidelines are designed for all visitors, not only tourists; this includes National Programme personnel not conducting science activity (which will have been reviewed for environmental impacts). Parties are also reminded that CEP XIX encouraged National programmes to continue to record visits by personnel to sites with visitor guidelines.

### **Recommendations**

The United Kingdom and Argentina, in conjunction with IAATO and ASOC, recommend that the CEP:

1. Notes the importance of regular reviews of existing site guidelines for visitors and the need to increase the number of sites with guidelines;
2. Adds regular site guideline reviews to its five-year work plan so as to improve the general review process;
3. Approves the concept of precautionary revision, even when the site has not been visited;
4. Agrees that it would be useful for a formal checklist be developed to aid future reviewers, and encourages interested Members to engage intersessionally with the UK, Argentina, IAATO and ASOC on this.
5. Approves the attached revised guidelines (see Appendix A) for Half Moon Island which reflect the precautionary step of closing a section of one of the guided walks during a period in the season due to penguins heavily extend into this area and urge Parties to carry out an in situ review in the first opportunity to obtain more evidence of the ground and definitively establish this recommendation or modify it or remove it;
6. Considers the new and revised guidelines detailed in papers: *ATCM XLI WP35 Review of Guidelines for Visitor Sites in the Antarctic Peninsula: New and Amended Guidelines*; *ATCMXLI W33 Proposed Amendment for Antarctic Treaty Site Guidelines for Visitors Pendulum Cove, Telefon Bay and Whalers Bay, Deception Island*; and *ATCM XLI WP34 Review of Guidelines for Visitor Sites in the Antarctic Peninsula: Revised Guidelines for Paulet Island*