



ENG

| | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Agenda Item: | ATCM 17 CEP 9c |
| Presented by: | IAATO |
| Original: | English |
| Submitted: | 10 May 2024 |

IAATO Site Management Methods

Attachments:

Atcm46_att122_e.pdf to att139_e.pdf: Attachments 1-18 - Site Guidelines

atcm46_att140.e.docx: Site Stewards Monitoring Report

atcm46_att141.e.pdf: IAATO Geofenced Whale Areas

IAATO Site Management Methods

Information Paper Submitted by the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO)

Introduction

- Various ATCMs have adopted a number of instruments to guide the assessment and management of tourism activities, often developed with advice from IAATO. These have proved very helpful to those organizing and conducting activities in Antarctica. A list of examples is given below, all of which were codified from established IAATO guidelines: Recommendation XVIII-1 (1994), which includes *Guidance for those Organizing and Conducting Tourism and Non-governmental Activities in the Antarctic*.
- Resolution 4 (2004), which includes *Guidelines on contingency planning, insurance and other matters for tourist and other non-governmental activities in the Antarctic Treaty area*.
- Measure 4 (2004) *Insurance and contingency planning for tourism and non-governmental activities in the Antarctic Treaty Area*. Resolution 9 (2012), *The assessment of land-based expeditionary activities*.
- Resolution 4 (2021), *General Guidelines for Visitors to the Antarctic*.

IAATO has developed guiding principles, set in the Association's bylaws, which bind its membership. The guiding principles were developed to ensure that IAATO Members' activities were consistent with the Antarctic Treaty, Environmental Protocol, and ATCM Measures, Resolutions and Recommendations. For example:

1. To advocate and promote the practice of safe and environmentally responsible travel to the Antarctic. (IAATO Bylaws Article II, Section B.)
2. To operate within the parameters of the Antarctic Treaty System. (IAATO Bylaws Article II, Section D.)
3. That planned activities will have no more than a minor or transitory impact on the Antarctic environment. (IAATO Bylaws Article II, Section E.)

IAATO maintains an extensive database in order to understand long-term trends to facilitate decision-making about the responsible management of its Operators' activities. Data is collected through Post Visit Report (PVR) forms, adopted by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties, which are submitted to the IAATO Secretariat and collated into an annual statistics overview.

Data from PVRs or other reporting methods (e.g., see information below about IAATO's Voluntary Cetacean and Pinniped Sightings (V-CaPS) and Site Stewardship), assists IAATO in understanding where further guidance or management of sites may be needed. When additional management needs are identified, IAATO utilizes its Committee and Working Group structure to create the necessary tools and support documents.

Below is further information about the tools IAATO uses for site management.

Site Guidelines

Since its inception in 1991, IAATO Operators, have actively self-managed their activities within the framework of the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS). Prior to adoption of a Resolution Site Guidelines for Visitors in 2005 at ATCM XXVIII (Resolution 5), IAATO had established site specific guidelines to manage their Operators activities. These early IAATO site specific guidelines included identifying

sensitive areas to be avoided and categorized sites as suitable for visits from vessels carrying less than 200 passengers and those sites suitable for visits from vessels carrying up to 500 passengers and ultimately formed the starting point for the for the development of subsequent ATCM Site Guidelines. The present 44 ATCM Site Guidelines for Visitors provide site-specific advice for some locations, which are essential tool for those managing safe and environmentally responsible visitation to the Antarctic.

Continuing to proactively manage Operator activities, IAATO created a suite of additional Site Guidelines that they use in the field. IAATO bases the decision to create a site guideline upon the analysis of PVR site visitation data as well as feedback from guides in the field. While creating the new IAATO site guidelines, IAATO uses Annex 2 of *Resolution 4 (2021)*, to remain consistent with the ATCM suite of guidelines. Several new guidelines are noted below. These, together with the ATCM Site Guidelines, cover a broad suite of site guidance to many of the most highly visited sites that IAATO Operators visit.

IAATO has created 18 new IAATO site guidelines in the last two years. These new IAATO guidelines, adopted at the recently held Annual Meeting (Annapolis, MD, USA, 23-25 April 2024), include both marine and terrestrial sites, and contain practical guidance for Operators and guides on how they should conduct visits in those sites, taking into account environmental values and sensitivities. IAATO would welcome working with Consultative Parties to review and confirm these site guidelines, should there be value seen in including them for adoption at future ATCMs.

The new IAATO Guidelines are as follows (See attachments 1-18 for full documentation):

1. Bongrain Point, Pouquoi Pas Island
2. Cape Lookout, Elephant Island
3. Chiriguano Bay, Brabant Island (Marine only)
4. Cierva Cove, Hughes Bay (Marine only)
5. Fort Point, Greenwich Island
6. Hidden Bay (Marine only)
7. Hovgaard Island
8. Hydruga Rocks
9. Jenny Island
10. Kerr Point, Ronge Island
11. Kinnes Cove/Madder Cliffs, Joinville Island
12. Leith Cove, Paradise Harbour
13. Penguin Point, Seymour Island
14. President Head, Snow Island
15. Prospect Point, Holtedah Bay
16. Red Rock Ridge
17. Robert Point, Robert Island
18. Spert Island (Marine only)

Between ATCM Site Guideline review periods, IAATO may add supplemental information to existing guidelines when helpful – information that assists with interpretation but does not affect the substance of the guidelines. An example of this is a small addendum to the ATCM Stonington Guideline, where an updated map was circulated.

For further Site Guideline information see ATCM 46 (2024) IP104 *A Five-Year Overview and 2023-24 Season Report on IAATO Operator Use of Antarctic Peninsula Landing Sites and ATCM Visitor Site Guidelines*.

IAATO Ship Scheduler and Live Ship Scheduler

Scheduling site-landings has always been a key role of IAATO from its founding in 1991. The methods have evolved with technology. The seasonal scheduling was originally done by manual means from 1991 through the 2000's. The implementation of the pre-season electronic ship scheduler in early 2010 was the first step with more advanced technology to help coordinate changes to vessel and yacht operations. However, in-season schedule changes were still managed via email, and when multiple changes needed to be made due to expedition needs, weather and ice, this presented a challenge for management.

With further advancement in technology, the Live Ship Scheduler was launched in 2019. The Live Ship Scheduler is a visual tool which integrates all software platforms the IAATO fleet currently uses, e.g., the hourly vessel tracking site and the IAATO database, to allow vessels to re-schedule landings in real time during the season. Booking changes are instantaneous and allow for faster and more reliable IAATO Fleet coordination.

Each year IAATO continues to evolve this tool prior to the season, creating improvements and new features, as Operators benefit from increases in bandwidth and consistency of internet access in Antarctica.

Stewardship Programs

IAATO leverages the extensive local expert knowledge of IAATO Operator field personnel for example through the development of site guidelines or monitoring for high mortality events. These Field Staff often have tertiary degrees in education, environmental sciences, and conservation management, and are passionate about protecting Antarctica. They identify changes occurring in Antarctica, from seasonal (current status of the wildlife reproductive cycle) to non-seasonal (changes in ice). Historically they have shared these observations with guests to enrich their experience as well as with colleagues on other vessels to expand their knowledge. Over the years a significant amount of anecdotal information has been shared but not formally recorded.

IAATO started two programs in the past two Antarctic summer seasons to help record this information in a more structured manner and assist IAATO's membership in making future management decisions. Next steps for both of these programs includes the development of technology and educational material to be shared with visitors.

Site Stewardship Program

The Site Stewardship Program started during the 2023-24 Antarctic season. Each vessel was initially allocated at least one site to report on based upon pre-season Ship Scheduler sites planned for the season. Reporting required responses to five questions and the submission of three images (see attached Site Stewards Monitoring Report example). Feedback from the reports was shared with the IAATO Fleet to consider for subsequent site visits. In total 114 reports were received, covering 27 sites.

For the 2024-25 season, this program will be further expanded to include more site assignments and additional questions on the report.

Voluntary Cetacean and Pinniped Sightings (V-CaPS) Program

V-CaPS started during the 2022-23 Antarctic season. In this program field staff provide information about opportunistic sightings of whales and seals to IAATO on a weekly basis. This data is then mapped and shared weekly with those who have contributed the submissions.

Information gathered during the 2022-23 season resulted in a proposal from the IAATO Marine Committee to create two new geofenced whale slow down zones as well as the expansion of time for a previously designated zone (*see attachment – FOM document of IAATO Geofenced Whale Areas*).

Information gathered during the 2023-24 season further supported the need to create the new geofenced areas.

IAATO remains committed to reporting to the CEP and ATCM information on IAATO Operator activities. IAATO values collaboration with all Antarctic Stakeholders, whether feedback from the field or data from researchers, to improve existing, or create new, tools to support the continued safe and environmentally responsible private sector travel to Antarctica.