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IP

Report of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators 2018-19

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Under Article III (2) of the Antarctic Treaty

Introduction

The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) is pleased to report its activities to ATCM XLII.

IAATO continues to focus activities in support of its mission statement to advocate and promote the practice of safe and environmentally responsible private sector travel to Antarctica. Further information on IAATO, its mission statement, primary activities and recent developments can be found at: www.iaato.org.

IAATO Membership and Visitor Levels during 2018-19

IAATO membership comprises 116 Operators and Associates, representing businesses based in 16 different Antarctic Treaty Party countries. IAATO Operators annually carry nationals from nearly all Treaty Parties and nationals from a further 54 non-Treaty Party countries

During the 2018-19 Antarctic season, the total number of visitors traveling with IAATO Operators was 56,168, representing an increase of 8.6% compared to the previous season. This figure represents a new high, having passed the previous peak of the 2017-18 season (51,707). Further details on tourism statistics including activities and nationalities can be found in ATCM XLII IP140 and ATCM XLII IP142.

The Membership Directory and additional statistics on IAATO member activities can be found at www.iaato.org.

Recent Work and Activities

Several initiatives were undertaken during the year, further strengthening systems in support of managing activities for growth. Many of these initiatives are detailed in other IAATO IPs to this meeting, including:

- ATCM XLII IP24 *Systematic Conservation Plan for Antarctica Peninsula Project Updates.*
- ATCM XLII IP138 *IAATO Mandatory Observer Scheme.*
- ATCM XLII IP143 *IAATO Deep Field Flight Activity*
- ATCM XLII IP98 *IAATO Education and Outreach*
- ATCM XLII IP99 *Reducing Single-Use Plastic and Waste Generated by Polar Tourism*

In addition to these initiatives, the following work has been undertaken:

- In September 2018, IAATO's Tourism Growth Working Group met in Cambridge, England to continue work done in previous workshops to develop tools for managing tourism growth. The Cambridge workshop focused on plans for a new ship scheduling program. Significant progress has been made and the tool will be beta tested in the coming year. We anticipate its full implementation in the 2020-21 Antarctic season.
- Continued investment in the assessment of field staff, recognising the importance of their role in enforcing Treaty Measures and Resolutions and IAATO standards and guidelines. Notably:
 - 1,435 field staff passed the IAATO online Field Staff Assessment and Certification Programme for the 2018-19 season, a 36% increase on last season. Certification is mandatory for many IAATO Operators; and 2,472 field staff are now registered for the online assessment.

- New IAATO online assessments – for ship’s crew and for administrative personnel – were developed and taken by 211 vessel and operations personnel.
- IAATO’s Field Staff Conference will be held in Sturbridge, Massachusetts 22-25 September 2019. This will be the fourth such conference organized in conjunction with the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO). This two-and-a-half-day event brings together polar expedition leaders and operation managers to review issues of concern.
- Education of members, their field staff and clients about Antarctic science and conservation issues remains a priority. During the 2018-19 season IAATO has:
 - Launched version 2.0 of a smart phone App (“IAATO Polar Guide: Antarctica”) designed to work offline, providing a “one-stop shop” of Treaty guidance, vessel management, and visitor guidelines on sites, biosecurity and wildlife.
 - Further expanded the IAATO Antarctic Ambassador initiative on social media platforms, and begun plans for a campaign to increase awareness of the program in the coming year.
 - Adopted a package of communications tools to assist members’ marketing departments and agents in designing sales and marketing materials that are consistent with IAATO’s mission and with IAATO and Antarctic Treaty System requirements.
 - Expanded its support of citizen science projects, increasing collaboration with research groups and NGOs such as the Polar Citizen Science Collective (<http://www.polarcollective.org>).
- Establishment of an Emperor Penguin Working Group to review IAATO activities in the vicinity of emperor penguin colonies. This new working group welcomes ongoing dialogue about responsible visitor management at penguin colonies.
- IAATO sought - and was accepted for – observer status by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) in order to contribute to discussions on effective management of the marine environment where there is significant human activity – including establishing Marine Protected Areas in the Southern Oceans.
- Continued efforts to strengthen shipping safety in the region including:
 - Continued growth in the number of vessels using IAATO’s bathymetry crowd sourcing scheme, increasing from 12 vessels to 22. Data collected is made available to hydrographic offices and research groups as needed.
 - IAATO participated in three Search and Rescue exercises and workshops. Some are listed toward the end of this document.

IAATO Meeting and Participation at Other Meetings during 2018-19

IAATO’s 2019 Annual Meeting took place 30 April – 3 May 2019 in Cape Town, South Africa. The decisions made and actions taken include:

- Approval to reorganize and increase Secretariat personnel from 8 to 11.5 full-time employees over the next two years. It is anticipated that a substantial portion of the increase in staff will be in the areas of operations, environment, and science support.
- Making the previously voluntary periodic observations of member operations a mandatory requirement of membership and refining the Guidelines for Observers.
- Adoption of new whale strike mitigation measures, including speed restrictions, in a defined geo-fenced area. [See ATCM XLII IP97 *New IAATO Procedures for Operating in the Vicinity of Whales.*]
- Adoption of a new Code of Conduct for IAATO Vessels. This followed a detailed review of IAATO’s statement on “Wilderness Etiquette” (2007) involving more than 50 contributors. The Code has been incorporated in IAATO Bylaws as a foundational document.

- Commitment to convene another Managing for Growth workshop, time and place to be determined during the coming year.
- Review and updates to existing guidelines and the development of new draft guidelines on elephant seals and helicopter operations to be trialled during the 2019-20 season, as well as the implementation of IAATO site guidelines for Elephant Point, Livingston Island.
- IAATO agreed to contract with the non-profit science and education organization, Oceanites Inc. (www.oceanites.org) to assess long-term population changes of the Gentoo penguin (*Pygoscelis papua*) in relation to human disturbance, with a particular focus on colonies in the central Gerlache Strait. A report is expected by 31 January 2020.
- Continuation of the ban on recreational use of RPASs in coastal areas with further developments including :
 - Authorized commercial RPAS flights are not allowed in coastal areas unless the activity is covered by the IAATO Operator's permit/authorization *or* the RPAS pilot has approval from the IAATO Operator with whom they are traveling.
 - Additionally, as vessels are increasingly using RPASs as navigational aids while in ice, IAATO has created Guidelines for RPAS for Navigational Use. These were trialed in draft form during the 2018-19 season prior to approval at IAATO2019.

As always, Treaty Party Representatives are cordially invited to join any of the open sessions during IAATO's Annual Meeting and subsequent workshops.

IAATO Secretariat staff and Operator representatives participated in internal and external meetings, liaising with Treaty Party Representatives, National Antarctic Programs, governmental, scientific, environmental, and industry organisations, including but not limited to:

- **COMNAP Annual Meeting**, Garmisch Partenkirchen, Germany, June 2018
- **IHO International Hydrographic Commission on Antarctica (HCA) 15th conference** in Brazil, June 2018;
- **SCAR/IASC Open Science Conference 2018**, June 2018, Davos, Switzerland
- **Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO) Conference & Annual Meeting**, Oslo, Norway, October 2018;
- **Antarctic Tourism Workshop**, April 2019, Rotterdam, Netherlands;
- **AECO SAR 4th Annual Table Top Exercise**, April 2019, Iceland;
- **COMNAP Antarctic SAR Workshop IV**, New Zealand, May 2019.

Environmental Monitoring

IAATO provides ATCM and CEP with detailed information on Operators' activities in Antarctica and works collaboratively with scientific institutions, particularly on long-term environmental monitoring and educational outreach. Oceanites and NOAA, for example, conduct research while traveling with IAATO Operators. IAATO members note sightings of fishing vessels for subsequent reporting to CCAMLR in support of the work against IUU fishing. Commencing in the 2019-2020 season, IAATO will participate in the CCAMLR Marine Debris Programme.

IAATO welcomes opportunities for collaboration with other organisations.

Tourism Incidents 2018-19

IAATO follows a policy of disclosing incidents to ensure risks are understood and appropriate lessons are learned for all Antarctic operators. The 2018-19 season saw no major incidents involving IAATO Operators.

In all, a total of 14 medical evacuations have been reported by IAATO Operators. In all instances both IAATO and the Operators involved are grateful for the assistance provided.

Scientific and Conservation Support

During the 2018-19 season, IAATO Operators cost-effectively or freely transported 133 scientific, support and conservation staff, and their equipment and supplies between stations, field sites and gateway ports. This included:

- Transfers of scientists to/from and between stations;
- Non-urgent medical evacuations;
- Field support of research projects;
- Collection of scientific samples and other data collection for research programs (all authorized);
- Transport of scientific equipment to/from stations (all authorized);
- Citizen science projects including data collection e.g. HappyWhale.com.
- Air and logistic support for deep field research programs

With Thanks

IAATO appreciates the opportunity to work cooperatively with Antarctic Treaty Parties, COMNAP, SCAR, CCAMLR, IHO/HCA, ASOC and others toward the long-term protection of Antarctica.