IP 162

ENG

Agenda Item: ATCM 4
Presented by: IAATO
Original: English
Submitted: 28/04/2017

Report of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators 2016-17

IP 162

Report of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators 2016-17

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 XL, under Article III (2) of the Antarctic Treaty.

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 by ensuring:

- Effective day-to-day management of member activities in Antarctica;
- Educational outreach, including scientific collaboration; and
- Development and promotion of Antarctic tourism best practices.

A detailed description of IAATO, its mission statement, primary activities and recent developments can be found in the *2017-18 Fact Sheet*, and on the IAATO website: www.iaato.org.

IAATO Membership and Visitor Levels during 2016-17

IAATO comprises 115 Operators and Associates, representing businesses from 66% of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Party countries. IAATO Operators carry nationals from nearly all Treaty Parties annually to Antarctica, and nationals from a further 50 non-Treaty Party countries. Since 2010, IAATO has represented all passenger vessels operating in Antarctic waters under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), with two exceptions; Japanese operated cruise-only vessel ASUKA II during the 2015-16 season and Japanese operated cruise-only vessel OCEAN DREAM in 2016-17.

During the 2016-17 Antarctic tourism season the total number of visitors travelling with IAATO Operators was 44,367, representing an increase of 15% compared to the previous season. IAATO numbers have not reached the peak of the 2007–8 season (46,265), however preliminary estimates for the 2017-18 season indicate that IAATO numbers will be close to the peak level of visitation.

Details on tourism statistics including activities and nationalities can be found in ATCM XL / IP163 rev. 1 *IAATO Overview of Antarctic Tourism: 2016-17 Season and Preliminary Estimates for 2017-18*. The Membership Directory and additional statistics on IAATO member activities can be found at www.iaato.org.

Recent Work and Activities

A number of initiatives were undertaken during the year, many of which are focusing on strengthening systems in support of managing activities for expected growth:

- In September 2016, the IAATO Tourism Growth Working Group and the IAATO Executive Committee met in Noto, Sicily for a three-day workshop to develop a proposed strategic approach and priorities for actions for IAATO in order to manage for the anticipated growth in tourism activities. The outcomes of this workshop will be discussed at IAATO's 2017 Annual Meeting.

Deleted: 7

- IAATO continues to invest in the strengthening and training of field staff, recognising the importance of their role in enforcing Treaty agreements and IAATO standards and guidelines. Specifically:
    - 880 field staff passed the IAATO online Field Staff Assessment and Certification Programme for the 2016-17 season. This represents a 30% increase on last year's participation. Certification is mandatory for many IAATO Operators and 1145 field staff have passed since 2012–13. The Assessment continually evolves, testing staff's knowledge of IAATO's Field Operations Manual which is updated annually and incorporates relevant updates from ATCM and CEP agreements.
    - In September 2017, IAATO, in conjunction with its sister organization in the Arctic, the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO), will hold the second combined Field Staff Conference in Iceland. The participation of Treaty Party representatives at the conference is welcomed.

- Educating members, their field staff and clients about Antarctic science and conservation issues is an important component of IAATO's work. During the 2016/17 season IAATO has:
    - Increased frequency in issues of Field Staff Newsletters, designed to disseminate latest information and build community spirit.
    - Instigated and expanded the IAATO Antarctic Ambassador Scheme on various platforms, including social media.
    - Increased participation in citizen science projects, including collaboration with a number of research groups and National Antarctic Programs (NAP).
    - Increased the number of key documents and guidelines translated into different languages and improved the translations used in IAATO's animated films.
- IAATO receives many enquiries on an annual basis from individuals, yachts and private groups who are at various stages of planning expeditions to Antarctica. IAATO explains the Antarctic Treaty System and permitting/authorization process to all of these and passes information to a relevant Competent Authority.
- Efforts to strengthen shipping safety in the region remain a priority within the organization. For example:
    - Crowd sourcing for hydrographic data continues to grow and the data remains available to Hydrographic Offices and research groups as requested.
    - The entry into force of the IMO's Code for ships operating in Polar Waters on 1st of January 2017 has seen the advent of work being completed to support the intent behind these regulations. Working with POLARVIEW and the International Association of Classification Societies (IACS) IAATO is contributing to, and supporting the development of, tools required to implement the Code's requirements, such as a database of ice and temperature information to support operator's risk assessments and Risk Index Systems.
    - In addition to taking part in COMNAP's Search and Rescue Workshop immediately following ATCM XXXIX, IAATO undertook a Search and Rescue Exercise with MRCC Chile in February, 2017 and attended the annual Arctic Search and Rescue Workshop and table top exercise in Iceland in April 2017. All of these initiatives are important in building relationships, trust and understanding as well, of course, as providing critical training opportunities.

IAATO Meeting and Participation at Other Meetings during 2016-17

IAATO's 2017 Annual Meeting will take place May 2-4, 2017 in Edinburgh, UK. This report was written in advance of that meeting. In addition to the above mentioned initiatives, the meeting will include:

- Introduction of IAATO's next Executive Director, Dr Damon Stanwell-Smith;
- Discussions on how to improve and expand the IAATO Yacht Outreach Campaign that is aimed at commercial and private non-IAATO Yacht Operators intending to visit Antarctica. Details of the current campaign can be found at www.iaato.org/yachts;
- Focused discussions on Managing for Growth initiatives in support of the Association's mission statement;
- Additional initiatives to strengthen field staff skills and qualifications framework and training;

- A review of IAATO's draft Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) policies following feedback from previous seasons and SCAR advice; and
- Proposed new guidelines and updates to existing guidelines such as crevasse awareness and specific advice on understanding fur seal behaviour.

Treaty Party representatives are 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 National Antarctic Programs, governmental, scientific, environmental and industry organisations. In addition to individual government meetings, IAATO took part in:

- **Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP) 27th Annual Meeting**, Goa, India, August 2016. IAATO places great merit in good cooperation and collaboration between its Membership and National Antarctic Programs.
- **Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators Conference & Annual Meeting,** , Oslo, Norway, October 2016.
- **Hydrographic Commission for Antarctica**, IHO, Tromsø, Norway June 2016.
- **International Ice Chart Working Group** – Ottawa, Canada, October 2016.
- IAATO continues to be active in the development of the **International Maritime Organisation**'s (IMO) mandatory Polar Code as an advisor to Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), participating in various IMO meetings.

Environmental Monitoring

IAATO continues to provide 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. This includes the Antarctic Site Inventory, the Lynch Lab at Stony Brook University and the Zoological Society of London/Oxford University. Additionally, IAATO Operators note sightings of fishing vessels for subsequent reporting to CCAMLR in support of the work against IUU fishing.

IAATO welcomes opportunities for collaboration with other organisations.

Tourism Incidents 2016-17

IAATO continues to follow a policy of disclosing incidents to ensure risks are understood and appropriate lessons are learned for all Antarctic operators. The 2016-17 season saw no major incidents involving IAATO Operators.

In all, a total of eight medical evacuations have been reported by IAATO Operators, three via McMurdo Base. In all instances both IAATO and the Operators involved are grateful assistance given.

Scientific and Conservation Support

During the 2016-17 season, IAATO Operators cost-effectively or freely transported over 279 scientific, support and conservation staff, and their equipment and supplies between stations, field sites and gateway ports. This included:

- Transfers of scientists between stations;
- Non-urgent medical evacuations;
- Field support of research projects;
- Collection of scientific samples and other data collection for research programs (all permitted);
- Transport of scientific equipment to/from stations;

- Various citizen science projects including data collection for projects such as HappyWhale.com.

Initial reports indicate that IAATO Operators and their passengers also contributed more than US$830,000 to scientific and conservation organisations active in Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic during 2016-17 season.

Over the past decade, these donations have totalled well over US$5 million.

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.