



Arctic Marine Tourism Project (AMTP)

Workshop Summary
Oslo – 16th of October 2014

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Executive Summary

The Oslo Arctic Marine Tourism Project (AMTP) workshop was the second of two planned workshops organized by Canada under the guidance of the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) working group. The purpose of both workshops was to stimulate discussion and generate feedback on the range of issues and concerns unique to vessel-based tourism across the Arctic region, with the ultimate goal of developing a ‘best practice’ document for Arctic Council endorsement.

The Oslo AMTP workshop was successful in bringing together a range of Arctic cruise tourism experts to discuss and build upon previously identified themes, as well as in articulating potential ‘best practices’ for the Arctic Council to consider pursuing, particularly those related to the dissemination and sharing of information, improved communications, and the harmonization of standards and processes.

Background

The Oslo Arctic Marine Tourism Project (AMTP) workshop was the second of two planned workshops organized by Canada under the guidance of the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) working group. The purpose of both workshops was to stimulate discussion and generate feedback on the range of issues and concerns unique to vessel-based tourism across the Arctic region, with the ultimate goal of developing a ‘best practice’ document for Arctic Council endorsement.

Hosted at the Embassy of Canada to Norway, this single-day workshop was organized and followed an agenda similar to that of the inaugural AMTP workshop in Ottawa earlier in the year. Unlike the Ottawa workshop, where the geographical representation of attendees was primarily North American, attendance was considerably more international and was comprised of a mixture of industry and industry associations, vessel operators and government representatives. For various reasons representatives from Permanent Participant organizations were unable to attend.

The Oslo workshop opened with an articulation of objectives followed by a subsequent overview of the results from the [previous workshop](#). At the request of several participants all structured discussions occurred in a plenary style format, in contrast to the Ottawa workshop where attendees broke out into smaller groups. Like the previous workshop, four pre-determined themes (wildlife and ecosystems, hazards, ship and shore based activities, third party contact) were used to focus analysis and structure discussion. Under the guidance of a facilitator, each theme was introduced individually, supported by examples, and then presented to the audience for discussion. In particular, attendees were asked to pay careful attention to where they thought the Arctic Council might play a role in the arena of sustainable

Arctic marine tourism, and to also offer/articulate specific ‘best practices’ for possible inclusion in a corresponding document.

Summary of Discussions

Theme #1 – Wildlife & Ecosystems

A niche area where the Arctic Council was identified as adding potential value was in establishing an international framework for developing site specific guidelines. While coastal administrations and industry associations like the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) and the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO) have examples of site specific guidelines currently in place, the Arctic Council could nevertheless provide a shared platform or standardized framework for the future establishment of site guidelines across the Arctic.

In doing so, careful attention would need to be paid to the wide range of commercial and private marine based tourism activity so as to not presuppose a problem that might not exist as many operators with an established history in the Arctic, or those operators who are members of industry associations are often very familiar with site specific issues and their accompanying guidelines. Instead, it is often the private vessels and pleasure craft, or the foreign tour operators with little to no Arctic experience that are of more significant concern.

For vessels operating across multiple jurisdictions during a single voyage, the regime for transporting firearms (i.e. rifles) used for wildlife safety is very often complicated and far from harmonized. The lack of consistency and predictability across the Arctic on gun laws (particularly in relation to polar bear safety) can result in confusion or even lack of compliance.

Indeed, pushing for greater harmonization amongst Arctic states on this issue and others was identified as an area for the Arctic Council to dedicate time and effort. While the Polar Code is perhaps the most current and illustrative example of a regional attempt at standardization (albeit through the International Maritime Organization), other areas like the aforementioned site guidelines, or the streamlining of cruise or tourism related permitting processes was encouraged.

On the issue of permitting, Canada was once again singled out as an Arctic nation whose complicated permitting requirements for marine tourism appear overly burdensome to the point where there is a disincentive to operate altogether, or where it is almost more time and cost effective to deliberately disregard these requirements and run the risk of a corresponding penalty.

Accordingly, the Arctic Council could push for simplified and streamlined permitting processes, ideally through a single portal or point of contact, which could in turn necessitate individual countries to reevaluate their domestic situation. In parallel with this, extending permits to last for multiple years (rather than a single season) was also seen as providing greater flexibility to the operator. Moreover, every effort should be made so that the fees for

required permits stay within or are of direct benefit to Arctic communities or the local tourism industry.

Much like the Ottawa AMTP workshop, a resounding theme throughout the Oslo AMTP workshop was that most cruise tourism in the Arctic (particularly tourism on expedition style vessels) is generally run by prudent operators invested in ensuring environmentally and culturally sustainable tourism. Accordingly, Arctic Council efforts should therefore target those vessels that fall outside this category. In the Antarctic, it was identified that IAATO recently attempted increased outreach with private expeditions, establishing a yacht outreach campaign that involved, *inter alia*, the placement of information posters at various gateway ports in multiple languages and the submission of articles or public notices to various yacht magazines. As a result, incidents involving private vessels in the Antarctic seem to have decreased. The Arctic Council could engage in similar outreach campaigns promoting sustainable Arctic marine tourism to targeted audiences, placing particular emphasis on the importance of voyage planning or the benefits of carrying AIS transponders.

In addition to targeting ‘best practices’ towards specific types of vessels, the Arctic Council could also leverage its wide reach as a high-level intergovernmental forum to promote concepts of sustainable Arctic tourism to non-Arctic (observer) nations with a burgeoning interest in the region. For example, some established Arctic expedition ship companies are noting an exponential increase in the numbers of Chinese and Indian passengers visiting both the Arctic and Antarctic. Moreover, Chinese ship charters are now occurring in Antarctica, and Chinese (state-run) operators are indicating interest in becoming members of Arctic tourism industry associations. In anticipation of a possible influx of new operators with a less established history in the Arctic, there is the opportunity for the Arctic Council member governments and observer countries to play a role in actively disseminating targeted messages to these audiences, ideally in local languages.

Theme #2 – Hazards

Recognizing advancements in satellite based weather and ice information, and that improved access to this information may contribute to the reduction of risks, it was felt the Arctic Council could encourage member governments, to the extent possible, to provide cruise operators with additional information to improve overall safety awareness. Similarly, improved bathymetric data and nautical charts was routinely cited an issue requiring attention. As an interim measure of sorts, several attendees suggested that the Arctic Council encourage the crowd-sourcing of bathymetric data or ‘mud maps’ to address gaps in current nautical charts.

While requiring careful planning, and while often logistically difficult to arrange, cruise ships can double as ‘ships of opportunity’ – effectively providing a platform for science, research or other activities incidental to the tourist component of the voyage. For example, AECO, in cooperation with the Arctic Council’s Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) working group and the Norwegian Polar Institute, are currently developing a standardized fauna registration system (mammal and bird counts) based on observations made by AECO members. Therefore, having the Arctic Council encourage closer ties between the scientific

community and cruise operators to leverage potential ‘ships of opportunity’ for platforms of monitoring and research was encouraged.

Theme #3 – Ship/Shore Based Activities

It was generally felt that developing Arctic Council ‘best practices’ for *specific* activities common to Arctic marine tourism (i.e. wildlife viewing, zodiac operations, behaviour at archaeological sites, etc) would be unnecessary not only to avoid duplication, but also because industry has developed this material through direct, firsthand experience, and is expected to continue to amend and expand upon this material into the future. Instead, the Arctic Council could consider lending support to existing guidelines through the process of incorporation by reference, therefore allowing material to be updated from time to time by those closest to the issues. Similarly, another suggestion was that the Arctic Council encourage its member and observer governments to develop national guidelines that would reflect or draw from pre-existing industry or NGO standards.

Theme #4 – Third Party Interaction

Discussions related to ‘third party interaction’ (in other words, the relationships and encounters between cruise ship operations, residents, industries, and other related Arctic stakeholders) occurred under the preceding three themes, therefore limiting the need for an entirely separate breakout. Nevertheless, workshop attendees stressed just how incumbent it is upon a cruise operation to effectively engage and actively work with Arctic communities that receive cruise ships and other visitors while similarly respecting the fact that in some communities may simply not want cruise visits at all.

The reasons for not wanting cruise tourism can be many: disturbing traditional hunting and fishing practices, draining local community supplies, or lack of economic benefit to make community organizational efforts worthwhile. However, it was also emphasized that the reasons for not wanting cruise visits can also be anecdotal, based on rumour, or be the opinions of a select few (and not necessarily the wishes of the community). It was noted by attendees that to reduce the likelihood of negative ship/community interactions, visiting vessels and community members alike need to promote and espouse basic principles of communication, planning and respect.

This notwithstanding, it was noted that despite best efforts, finding and maintaining regular or predictable points of contact for ship to shore communications within a community is challenging. Accordingly, the Arctic Council could play a role here in promoting communication standards.

As a concluding point, participants felt that ostensibly small gestures made by the Arctic Council could be of great benefit. For example, in some parts of the Arctic (and at both local and national scales) operators have received mixed messaging about whether cruise tourism was indeed a welcome industry. Accordingly, having the Arctic Council encourage its members to identify in general terms whether Arctic marine tourism is an activity that is welcomed or encouraged would be beneficial.

Annex # 1: Oslo AMTP Workshop Participants

Name	Organization	Email
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Annex # 2: Oslo AMTP Workshop Agenda



Arctic Marine Tourism Project (AMTP) Workshop # 2

Location/Date/Time

*Canadian Embassy
4th floor, Wergelandsveien 7, N-0244 Oslo
Thursday, October 16th, 9:00 – 17:00*

Draft Agenda

Time	Agenda Item
9:00 – 9:30	Coffee, Pastries & Registration
9:30 – 9:45	Opening Remarks
9:45 – 10:15	Introductions & Workshop Objectives
10:15 – 11:00	AMTP Ottawa Workshop #1 Results
11:00 – 11:15	Coffee & Refreshments
11:15 – 12:00	Theme/Breakout Group #1 <i>Wildlife & Ecosystems</i>
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch (Provided)
13:00 – 13:45	Theme/Breakout Group #2 <i>Hazards</i>
13:45 – 14:30	Theme/Breakout Group #3 <i>Ship/Shore Based Activities</i>
14:30 – 14:45	Coffee & Refreshments
14:45 – 15:30	Theme/Breakout Group #4 <i>Third Party Contact</i>
15:30 – 16:45	Plenary Presentation – AMTP Best Practice Document
16:45 – 17:00	Closing Remarks