Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic

Iceland Workshop

February 4-5th 1998

Sponsored by WWF Arctic Programme

Workshop Summary

Introduction

The workshop was held in Iceland on February 4-5, 1998 to further efforts to implement the *Principles and Codes of Conduct for Arctic Tourism* developed by the WWF Arctic Programme in collaboration with tour operators, representatives of Arctic tourism destinations, other conservation groups, management organisations and researchers. The workshop was sponsored by the WWF Arctic Programme, which currently serves as the Secretariat for this collaborative project on *Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic*. Participants in the workshop included representatives from the tourism industry ranging from very small to very large scale operators, and from the conservation and research communities (Appendix A; List of Participants).

Workshop objectives included three related components:

1. To develop criteria for measuring progress towards achievement of the goals described by the Arctic Tourism Guidelines.

2. To identify pilot projects for testing the Guidelines and guidance for their implementation; and

3. To consider options for the appropriate organisational or programmatic structure to provide continued leadership and guidance for the implementation of the Principles and Codes of Conduct for Arctic Tourism now and into the future.

Summary of Workshop Discussions

I. Development of Criteria for Measuring Progress

Two presentations were given that provided suggestions for ways to measure the extent of compliance with, or achievement of, the Principles for Arctic Tourism. Margaret Johnston described a set of indicators and measures, drawn directly from the Principles and Codes, that can be used as simple check-list by operators to assess compliance with or achievement of the Principles and Codes of Conduct.[1] These indicators and measures may be adapted to meet the needs of specific operations of any size or scale, or incorporated into broader environmental management practices. They are intended to emphasise positive achievement by assisting operators in determining what measures are being, or could be taken. Three different potential scenarios for evaluating achievement were highlighted:

1. self-assessment by tour operators;

2. external review of an operation, such as by an independent panel or oversight organisation;

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[1] Appendix D; paper developed by Margaret Johnston and Dave Twynam of Lakehead University entitled "From Principles to Measures: A discussion of Detailed Criteria and Methods of Measuring Compliance with the Responsible Tourism Principles and Codes: Draft Indicators and Codes"

3. overall evaluation of the results of implementing the Principles and Codes at different scales (e.g. local, regional, national or Arctic-wide).

Ms. Johnston also highlighted potential roles of an organisation to provide ongoing guidance for the implementation of the Principles and Codes.[2]

The second presentation suggested a slightly more formal process and structure for implementing and monitoring compliance with the Principles and Codes. Tutta May Endresen described an approach involving the development of an industry-wide Environmental Code of Practice as a framework though which the Principles for Arctic Tourism could be integrated into the overall planning and daily operations of all Arctic tour operators. An Environmental Code of Practice would include check-lists and would also describe specific best practices and environmental targets. Individual operators would formulate environmental management systems that would describe objectives, action plans and would document detailed criteria and operational recommendations for their particular operations. Ms. Endresen cited the Environmental Code of Practice developed by the EU Seaports Association as an example of this approach.

Questions raised by these presentations included:

- *Should evaluation of achievement of the Principles and Codes be accomplished through self assessment by operators or through some mechanism for external review and evaluation or certification?* Some participants indicated a preference for external review that would ensure credibility for operators wishing to make a claim regarding their performance regarding the Principles and Codes. Others noted their preference for self-evaluation and monitoring of progress, highlighting potential difficulties regarding qualifications of external reviewers.

- *What level of formality and structure – and at what scale (industry-wide or operation-specific) - is desirable for the implementation and evaluation of the Principles and Codes?* Participants noted that depending on the scale and nature of the operations, this could vary significantly from case to case. The need to allow for flexibility to accommodate the variation in size and scale of operations was highlighted.

- *Is there, or should there be, some minimum level of achievement identified in order for an operator to make a legitimate and credible claim of adherence to the Principles and Codes?*

Participants did not resolve these questions, noting the difficulty in doing so in the absence of practical experience with the application of the Codes and Principles. They suggested that experience with Pilot Projects over the next year be allowed to inform later discussion of these issues. Different pilot projects are likely to employ different variations of the suggestions provided in the presentations. This will provide the tangible experience needed for more

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[2] M. Johnston and D. Twynam *"Recommendations for Implementing Body"* are incorporated in the discussion of the Future Organizational or Programmatic Structure on page 8, and Appendix E.

conclusive discussions on the subject of effective processes and criteria for measuring achievement of the Principles and Codes.

II. Pilot Projects

The largest proportion of time at the workshop was dedicated to consideration of Pilot Projects for testing the implementation of the Principles and Codes of Conduct for Arctic Tourism. Participants developed a shared understanding of goals and expectations for the Pilot Project process and agreed on steps for proceeding. This was accomplished through discussion of the appropriate role of the pilot projects, sharing of specific pilot project proposals, and the development of a process for implementing and reporting on the results of the projects.

The primary purpose of the Pilot Projects is to test the relevance, implementability, and measurability of the Principles and Codes in real tour operations over the next year. In addition, they will play a valuable role in bringing the Principles and Codes to the attention of an expanded audience through increased exposure to tourists, operators and communities. Experience with both of these roles will important valuable feedback to the continuing development of an effective mechanism for providing incentives to conserve the natural values of the Arctic environment for the mutual benefit of conservation and the Arctic tourism industry.

The following points of understanding and expectation emerged from discussions of the pilot Project process:

- Funding of Pilot Projects is the responsibility of the individuals, organisations or companies performing them.

- Pilot Projects should, at a minimum, involve implementing new actions consistent with the Principles and Codes that go beyond existing activities, and should demonstrate implementation of at least one or more of the Principles.

- Use of the WWF logo on written materials such as brochures, newsletters or other documentation provided to passengers (or potential passengers) is subject to specific individual agreements with the WWF Arctic Programme and in some cases the relevant WWF National Organisation. Approval of its use will be based on following conditions:

→ It must be clear that the logo is being used in the context of the WWF initiative on *«Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic»*. Explanatory language accompanying the logo should state that *«we support the WWF initiative on Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic by conducting (or participating in) this pilot project.…»* A brief description of the nature of the pilot project and how it supports the initiative should also be included.

→ Under no circumstances should the logo be used in such a manner as to suggest that it represents an eco-label.

→ Specific requests, for use of the logo (including the proposed language) should be submitted to the WWF Arctic Programme for approval.

- Reports on the Pilot Projects will be presented at a workshop in approximately one year (first quarter of 1999). The following guidelines should be used in preparing the reports:

A. Description of the context of the Pilot Project.

B. Identification of which Principles or Codes are relevant to the operation's activities and which (if not all) are specifically targeted for the purposes of the Pilot Project.

C. Description of the pre-project status of activities related to the Principles and Codes identified in B (to establish the baseline against which to compare progress).

D. Description of specific activities planned and undertaken to implement the Principles or Codes and expected benefits

E. Description of method for measuring achievement (e.g. checklist or other mechanism).

F. Discussion of results

   1) What worked (ease of implementation, benefits gained, etc.)

   2) What didn't work (identification of specific challenges or barriers to successful implementation, disadvantages, non-achievement of potential benefits).

   3) Description of costs and benefits.

G. Next Steps – description of any plans for continuing implementation of Principles and Codes.

H. Recommendations for future of Principles and Codes for Arctic Tourism based on Pilot Project experience;

   1) Suggestions for improving the Principles and Codes

   2) Suggestions for potential useful role(s) for a supporting organisation

Sixteen proposals for pilot projects in varying stages of development were presented (Appendix F). They represented a diversity of approaches for testing implementation of the Principles and Codes, and covered a range of geographic locations in Iceland, Norway, Canada, Greenland and Svalbard. Through discussions, participants assisted one another with suggestions for further development of individual Pilot Project proposals with the goal maximising the likelihood that they will provide useful information for the future development and wider application of the Principles and Codes.

Next Steps for Pilot Projects

Following the presentations, a schedule of next steps in the process for moving forward with the Pilot Projects was developed:

1) Pilot Project leaders will submit revised Pilot Project Descriptions to the Secretariat by March 31st 1998. The Project Descriptions should be no more than one page and should include:

>   A.   Brief description of the project (1-2 paragraphs) including specific goals.
>
>   B.   Name of contact person (and contact information).
>
>   C.   Geographic location.
>
>   D.   Scale of the operation (based on number of clients on trips).
>
>   E.   Which principles will be tested.
>
>   F.   Target group (operator/tourist/community).
>
>   G.   Scope of pilot (specific trips or overall programme or operations).
>
>   H.   Anticipated timing.

2) Indication of willingness to have Pilot Project Description placed on a website. The Secretariat   will compile the Pilot Project Descriptions and make them available to all Pilot Project leaders   on the web site of Arctic Programme. Posting of individual Pilot Project Descriptions on   website will be subject to approval by Pilot Project leaders.

3) The Secretariat will schedule and plan for a workshop in early 1999 at which Pilot Project   reports will be presented. Selection of meeting site will be determined taking into consideration   the ease and cost of transportation, and the opportunity for increased exposure of the initiative.   Pilot Project leaders indicated their interest and willingness to participate in this workshop.

4) Written Reports on Pilot Projects will be submitted to the Secretariat one month before the 1999 workshop. Guidelines for the written reports have been developed based on discussions at this workshop.

5) A workshop will be held in the January-March 1999 timeframe to share Pilot Project results and experiences and to discuss the implications of the Pilot Project findings on planning next steps for the broader implementation of the Principles and Codes of Conduct for Arctic Tourism.

III. Future Organisational or Programmatic Structure

In considering the desired organisational or programmatic structure to provide continued leadership and guidance for the implementation of the Principles and Codes of Conduct for Arctic Tourism, discussion focused on the extent to which a new, dedicated organisation is needed and the role it should play. Participants identified and briefly explored two key questions:

1) *What programmes or organisations currently exist that address the same or similar issues?*

   Participants spent several minutes listing existing relevant programmes or organisations with which they are familiar (Appendix C; Facilitator's Flip Chart Notes, page 2). The following issues and questions were raised for in considering what would be the most appropriate relationship of this Arctic initiative to the other, more global programmes:

   - Duplication of effort should be avoided and this group should carefully consider whether existing efforts could provide the umbrella for this Arctic-specific effort.

   - Could any of the existing programmes provide an appropriate home for the continuation of this effort?

   - Can any of the existing programmes provide a model, or lessons, for the development of a new, dedicated organisation to address Arctic tourism specifically?

2) *What is needed/desired for the success of this effort that existing programmes do not provide?*

   Participants identified a number of characteristics of an organisation that could enhance the likelihood of success of implementation of the Principles and Codes and incentives for operator involvement:

   - Non-governmental and voluntary (outside of the context of legal standards or requirements).

   - Collaboratively supported by industry and conservation groups (it was noted that an organisation that is purely NGO-based or purely industry-based could create a disincentive for some operators and could undermine public credibility and support).

   - Specific to the Arctic.

   - Inclusive and accessible to all operators or communities, regardless of scale.

   - Acts as an independent body that can verify credibility of a claim of compliance with or achievement of Arctic Principles and Codes.

   - Provides a mechanism for demonstrating and communicating compliance or progress towards achievement of the Principles and Codes (such as a stamp of verification or approval, or a logo).

- Provides guidance in a form that is clear, easily understood and communicated, and flexible enough to be adapted to specific situations (complicated, rigid guidance would be a dis-incentive to operator participation).

- Provides for rewarding demonstrable progress towards achieving full implementation of the Principles and Codes (a scale that allows for measuring and rewarding ongoing effort and progress rather than compliance or non-compliance with a specific standard).

Additional ideas on the potential roles of a governing organisation for the Principles and Codes for Arctic Tourism were included in the list of *"Recommendations for Implementing Body"* developed by researchers Margaret Johnston and Dave Twynam. These include:

- Supporting the development of planning and monitoring protocols for use by operators participating in the programme.

- Evaluating new technologies applicable to Arctic tourism and identification of those which reduce impacts.

- Providing information to assist operators in identifying conservation and protection issues in their areas of operation.

- Providing information to assist operators in identifying education and training needs of local populations.

- Assisting operators in the development of Arctic interpretation programs, printed material and internationally recognised signage to support the program.

- Supporting the organisation of conferences and seminars for member operators and communities for the purposes of exchanging ideas.

- Sponsoring a workshop on research priorities in Arctic tourism.

- Supporting the extension of research which uses scientific and technical methods to monitor the impacts of Arctic tourism.

- Development of an appropriate evaluation framework for the overall programme.

No decisions or specific recommendations regarding a future guiding organisation or programme emerged from this discussion. Instead it was agreed that the existing representative Interim Steering Committee will continue in its oversight role, with the WWF Arctic Programme acting as the Secretariat. The Interim Steering Committee will undertake the task of developing a discussion paper on organisational options.

Summary of Interim Steering Committee meeting

The Interim Steering Committee met in an evening session and identified a number of specific tasks that will be undertaken by different members. These include:

A) Preparation of an Organisational Options Discussion Paper *(Jeanne Pagnan).*

B) Develop a consultation process for involvement of Arctic Communities for development of Codes of Conduct for Destination Communities.

    1) Pilot Project to develop and test a consultation process *(Cheri Kemp-Kinnear).*

    2) Assessment of pilot and broader implementation of consultation process in additional *(assignment to be decided).*

C) Marketing, Public Relations and Increasing Awareness of the Programme *(Secretariat).*

    1) Development of marketing plan *(Secretariat with D. Twynam).*

    2) Development of distribution list (database) to provide information to operators, tourists, communities for *(Secretariat will solicit input from all Steering Committee members).*

    3) Identification of additional opportunities for providing materials to an expanded audience (e.g. conferences, meetings, etc.) *(Secretariat will solicit input from all Steering Committee members).*

    4) Translation of Principles and Codes into other relevant languages *(Secretariat with assistance from Steering Committee members)*

    5) Securing funding for the secretariat, printing, translation, etc. *(Secretariat with assistance from Steering Committee members)*

    6) Maintain Web-Site to provide information to any interested parties *(Secretariat).*

D) Distribution of Pilot Project Reporting Guidelines developed at this workshop *(Secretariat)*

E) Pilot Project programme assessment and evaluation *(Secretariat will plan and organise 1999 workshop).*