Ross Sea
Operational Considerations

General Considerations

- The Ross Sea is a unique environment and involves more substantial operational challenges than operating on the Peninsula due to:
  - The location is extremely remote (5-7 days from either New Zealand or Tasmania)
  - During the Southern Ocean crossing vessels are highly exposed during the 1500nm transit. Southern Ocean weather can be extreme; winds of 100kts + and sea states of 20+m
  - The entrance to the Ross Sea is ice dependent - the Ross Sea pack ice typically does not open until mid-January.
  - There is extreme variability between seasons due to the higher latitudes (10 degrees higher than the Peninsula). Major storms can materialize in any month. Summer is considered mid-Jan to late-Feb.
  - High latitudes give colder temperatures, 24/7 light and shorter season than the Peninsula.
  - Rescue or medical assistance is at least several days away.
  - Any request for assistance from a National Program will have implications for future tourism in the Ross Sea. Vessel coordination is not only between IAATO vessels but also with NAP logistics (including resupplies and flights)
  - Regular Ship Scheduler timings/placement may not work
    - There may be times when you have to wait 24 hours for the right conditions to carry out operations
  - It is strongly recommended Captains and/or Ice Pilots possess Ross Sea Experience; It is strongly recommended that at least 50% of the expedition team have previous Ross Sea Experience.

Observer Requirements

- Expect to have an Observer from the NZ Government onboard – a Ship Rep as they are called. At times these Observers may be combined with DOC observer.
- Expect to have an Observer from New Zealand Department of Conservation (DOC) onboard, if you are planning on going to the NZ Sub-Antarctic Islands.
- Do note that visits to the NZ Sub Antarctic Islands require special permits from DOC, and numbers are limited. Permits require a long lead time (6+ months). For commercial operations the operator will need to become a concessionaire.
- It is possible the DOC and Ship Rep observer may be combined.

Station Visits

- For the 2022-23 season Station Visits are not permitted (as of September 26, 2022)
- When near any bases or active airspace, it will be important that all helicopters and RPAS operations are coordinated with Base Ops [Base Communications information will be provided closer to the season].

Hut Visits

- Huts require special permission/authorization to visit, as well as a key to access the huts.
- Some huts are in special visitor areas of Antarctic Specially Protected Areas, and require further permissions.
- Important to take into account huts have limited numbers allowed inside and cycling a full ship through does take time in a volatile environment.
- Huts have limited numbers for both Government and Non-Government Operators which need to be taken into account.
- For this season, the NZ Government, NZ Environment, and Heritage Trust will continue to monitor numbers, but no further actions will be in place.
Medical Screening and Medical Evacuation

- For Ross Sea voyages, enhanced/in-depth medical screening is essential to mitigate the risk of medical issues at high latitudes as time to rescue can be over a week. It is highly recommended that a doctor (emergency physician) be added to the expedition team. Larger vessels (150+) pax should carry two physicians to enable 24/7 care of a critical patient.
- It is important IAATO Operators continue to be as self-sufficient as possible, this includes working with each other for possible support during medical evacuations.
- If a medical evacuation is deemed necessary, DO NOT call the bases, the first point of contact will be RCC New Zealand and they will help coordinate.
- To obtain as prompt an evacuation as possible, it is important to have all the necessary insurance paperwork at hand – Evacuation Insurance is a MUST in the Ross Sea.
- Important to note that the best/only course of action may be to head back to New Zealand or Australia.

Tools for the season

- Special concerns/timetables to be considered for McMurdo Sound due to base logistics/resupply. Information from COMNAP, USAP, ANZ, and RCCNZ and will be supplied in due course.
- Special Ross Sea EMER – so vessels are aware when other IAATO vessels are in the area and can try to work together if needed.
- Pre-season mentoring/discussions with Captains, ELs, Staff, Decision Makers in the company – to better prepare all for the realities of the Ross Sea.