

# IAATO Site Stewardship Program

## What is the Site Stewardship Program?

The purpose of the Site Stewards program is to begin to develop a record of IAATO Operator observations of the changing environment on the Antarctic Peninsula. These observations will allow IAATO to identify trends in environmental changes both intra- and inter-seasonally and may inform future management decisions.

This program requires IAATO Operators to have their field staff provide at least three pictures of their assigned site and fill out a form with questions regarding the condition of the site. Monitoring report forms should be submitted to IAATO Ship Scheduler ([shipscheduler@iaato.org](mailto:shipscheduler@iaato.org)) as soon as possible but no later than 24 hours after the end of an expedition.

## Why did IAATO develop the Site Stewardship Program?

At IAATO's 2023 Annual Meeting, the Five-Year Strategic Plan was introduced and approved by the membership. This plan was focused on moving the organization from a reactive to a proactive position, while maintaining the association's commitment to its activities having no more than a minor or transitory impact.

Environmental change is one of the important challenges for Antarctic tourism that is addressed in the Strategic Plan. To confront this challenge, IAATO Operators collectively committed to allocate their staff to participate in a site monitoring program for the 2023-24 season.

The process will evolve over the next few years with more comprehensive data requests and technology.

## How do operators participate in the Site Stewardship Program?

After Derby Day, the IAATO Secretariat will review each vessel's itinerary selections and assign its sites for the season.

Each time that a vessel visits the assigned site, IAATO Operators' field staff will be asked to take three or more photographs of the site and fill out a Site Stewards Monitoring Report Form with questions pertaining to the condition of the site.

### Images

In the 2023-24 season, IAATO Operators' field staff were required to submit three images to the IAATO Secretariat alongside each Monitoring Report. The first image (A) was to be taken from the zodiac 50-100 feet offshore from the landing site.

Images B and C were at the field staff's discretion during the first visit. The IAATO Secretariat recommended that field staff carefully choose image B and image C, as these images should stay consistent throughout subsequent visits to most clearly demonstrate changes at each site.

Images B and C were intended to be of attributes of the site that field staff consider important to monitor during subsequent visits. For example, images B and C may be of penguin highways, pathways that guests walk, snowbanks or rocks alongside the site.

When emailing these photos, the files should be renamed to be consistent with the Monitoring Report Form and a description of each image should be included in the form.

### Monitoring Report Form

Please see the 2024-25 season's Monitoring Report Form [in Box](#) for the most up to date questions to fill out.

The images and accompanying Monitoring Report Form must be emailed to the IAATO Ship Scheduler ([shipscheduler@iaato.org](mailto:shipscheduler@iaato.org)) account as soon as possible after a site visit. For vessels without Internet connection, these reports should be submitted no later than 24 hours after the end of the expedition.



## Materials

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See the [Site Stewardship Program 2024-25](#) folder on Box.

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) When are operators required to do this?
  - Every time the vessel visits sites assigned to it for that season.
- 2) If the vessel's itinerary changes and it is no longer planned to visit a site, does the vessel have to go because the site was assigned?
  - No. Operators are only required to complete a Monitoring Report when they have visited the site. The IAATO Secretariat recognizes that itineraries change for a variety of reasons.
- 3) Our field staff want to do a monitoring report for a site due to its attributes. Can they submit a report even if the vessel was not assigned the site?
  - Yes. We appreciate any feedback or insight that field staff may have on the sites – just don't forget to have them do the monitoring report for the ones that your vessel is assigned!
- 4) Should drone images be submitted?
  - No. The use of drones by operators is based upon the authorization/permits from their competent authorities. IAATO would be required to obtain permissions from the competent authorities to use drones for the purposes of this program.
- 5) Do the images need to be captured with a DSLR camera, or are phone images sufficient?
  - Either device is fine for images. What is important in the early stages of this program is that the images are being captured.
- 6) Are there plans to use an app for this in the future?
  - Yes. IAATO is looking into further expanding the Polar Guide App to help collect this information. If you have suggestions for how to achieve this, please feel free to reach out.
- 7) Does this replace other reporting requirements from IAATO?
  - No. Other reporting requirements are still in place, including Avian Influenza and Marine Debris at sites. Please continue to follow the reporting protocols for those situations.
- 8) What happens after they are submitted to IAATO?
  - Submissions will be reviewed to determine if there is any urgent information that must be shared with the rest of the fleet. Click Box folder to see the insights and advice from Monitoring Report Forms. Further analysis will occur after the season to determine if any actions must occur prior to the following season.

## Contact

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Please email IAATO Ship Scheduler ([shipscheduler@iaato.org](mailto:shipscheduler@iaato.org)) with any questions or concerns regarding the Site Stewardship Program.