Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic: The Way Forward

Workshop in Husum, Germany
3-5 March 1999
Sponsored by WWF Arctic Programme

Workshop Summary

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Workshop Summary

Introduction

The fifth workshop on Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic was held in Husum, Germany on March 3-5 1999, sponsored by the WWF International Arctic Programme (WWF-AP). The workshop was attended by Arctic tour operators of varying size and type, conservationists, researchers, and other interested individuals from twelve countries (a list of participants can be found at Appendix A).

The purpose of this workshop was to explore the future direction of the Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic project.

Specific objectives included:

➢ To share and explore the lessons learned from the 1998 season Pilot Projects;

➢ To explore and identify the most promising mechanisms for creating incentives for sustainable tourism in the Arctic, including, but not limited to, independent certification; and

➢ To develop recommendations for the future direction of the Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic project, including actions, roles and responsibilities, and the future form of collaboration on this project.

To accomplish these goals, the workshop combined a series of presentation and discussion sessions (see Appendix B for the workshop agenda). Presentations were designed to respond to information needs identified at the meeting in Iceland in February 1998, and to enable participants at this meeting to have informed and productive discussions about the future direction of this project.

Workshop Summary
**Presentations**

The workshop presentations fell into four major categories:

1. **Description of 1998 pilot project experiences.** Pilot project leaders described their projects, including what worked well, what challenges they encountered, and what lessons and recommendations emerged from their experience with these first formal attempts to implement the Principles and Codes of Conduct for Arctic Tourism (see agenda for list of Pilot Projects presented). In addition, Margaret Johnston and David Twynam presented an overview of common themes and observations based on their review of written pilot project reports.

2. **Overview of WWF context for the Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic Project.** Three presentations were offered to provide a better understanding of the overall WWF context of this effort, and the specific conservation goals of the WWF Arctic Programme:

   a) Laura Cooper reviewed the current sustainable tourism related activities of different WWF programme offices around the world. These include activities in the areas of:

   - Tourism strategy or policy development
   - Tourism research
   - Conservation education through tourism
   - Development of guidelines for tourist and tour operators
   - Financial agreements with tourism related businesses
   - Working with governments on sustainable tourism regulations
   - Partnerships with tourism industry

   Ms. Cooper described the findings of a recent survey. It revealed that, of the 27 WWF offices that responded, 96% are actively involved in tourism-related efforts, 89% believe that partnerships with the tourism industry to develop sustainable tourism are a good idea, and 82% believe that addressing tourism has the potential to help WWF achieve some of its conservation goals. A challenge encountered by many WWF offices is how to use tourism as a conservation tool without promoting tourism in a way that inadvertently increases environmental damage, especially in ecologically sensitive areas.

   b) Niall Watson of WWF-UK reported on a recent meeting to develop a WWF-wide policy on tourism. In developing this policy WWF is responding to increasing tourism-related interest and activity inside WWF, and also to the increasing momentum outside WWF of sustainable tourism activities. The Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic project has provided intellectual and practical leadership within WWF and valuable insights for the rest of the WWF family in developing a cohesive policy on tourism. The WWF policy is expected to emphasize the opportunities represented by tourism for raising awareness of environmental and

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1 Ms. Cooper is a consultant to the WWF Arctic Programme
conservation issues, including pollution prevention and resource consumption, and developing sustainable tourism as an economic resource by working closely with local and indigenous communities. The policy will be finalized sometime in the spring of 1999.

c) Peter Prokosch (WWF Arctic Programme) reviewed the conservation objectives of the WWF Arctic Programme. He described objectives in six major areas, noting some of the specific activities relevant to the Arctic Tourism Project. The six areas were:

1. Addressing the global significance of the Arctic
2. Reserving natural ecosystems and habitats through protected areas
3. Protection of native Arctic species
4. Sustainable use of exploited resources
5. Pollution reduction and prevention
6. Indigenous peoples

All of these objectives are reflected in the Principles and Codes of Conduct for Arctic Tourism. Dr. Prokosch encouraged participants to suggest new ways for WWF to collaborate with tour operators to achieve these and their own objectives.

3. Overview of global activities related to the Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic Project. At the Iceland meeting participants asked what programmes or organizations currently exist that address the same or similar sustainable tourism issues. The group wanted to avoid duplication of effort, consider whether other groups or organizations might provide an appropriate home for this group’s efforts, and find models or lessons that could inform the development of a programme dedicated to Arctic tourism specifically. Jeanne Pagnan presented a report (prepared for the Arctic Programme) that reviewed non-WWF global, regional and national sustainable tourism activities.2 Ms. Pagnan highlighted several categories of activities currently being pursued by various groups, including:

- International activities originating in the 1991 Earth Summit and further developed in Agenda 21. These are efforts directed at governments as the authorities responsible for providing national frameworks for sustainable tourism, and at industry as the implementers of such efforts. Examples include Agenda 21 for The Travel and Tourism Industry - Towards Environmentally Sustainable Development,3 as well as regional Agendas 21 for Tourism.

- Development of guidelines by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has been pursued at the local, regional and global levels, similar to the Principles and Codes of Conduct developed by the Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic project.

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2 Ms. Pagnan was a participant in the Iceland meeting and a member of the Interim Steering Committee. She was asked by the WWF Arctic Programme to conduct a review of Non-WWF sustainable tourism activities for this meeting.

3 Developed by a collaboration of the World Travel and Tourism Council, World Tourism Organization, and Earth Council
There is also an increasing trend towards the development of specific destination guidelines.

- Industry associations aimed at improved integration of business, environmental, and local community interests have emerged to address the impacts of tourism. This has sometimes taken the form of programmes to acknowledge and publicly recognize environmental performance of members who demonstrate voluntary adherence to guidelines or codes, taking advantage of the marketability of “green” operations.

- Certification schemes whereby tour operators or destination businesses can become certified to a pre-determined set of environmental criteria based on evaluation by an independent party.

4. United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). Niall Watson (WWF-UK) provided some specific details on current and anticipated activities of the CSD related to sustainable tourism. He explained that the CSD is the established forum for international political activity to promote implementation of Agenda 21 (the product of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro). It provides a forum for analyzing progress at national, regional and international levels, and coordinates the activities of other UN bodies related to sustainable development. He noted that tourism has only recently been identified as a major agenda item for the CSD for its next meeting in April 1999 (other agenda items include sustainable production and consumption, oceans, small island developing states, and investigation into voluntary initiatives). He reported that the following issues have been identified as possible elements of the CSD’s work on tourism:

- Collect and disseminate information on best practices and other instruments for minimizing negative and promoting positive impacts of tourism – and promoting a global network
- Research into “appropriate measures” for promoting sustainable tourism
- Development of indicators for sustainable tourism
- Survey of existing voluntary initiatives
- Elaborate a comprehensive set of guidelines for sustainable tourism
- Call on governments to establish national strategies for sustainable tourism and to promote a more favorable framework for small and medium-sized tourism enterprises
- Call upon the tourism industry to develop and promote sustainable tourism and to continue the development and use of voluntary initiatives.

Mr. Watson further reported that the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) will also address tourism at its meetings in 1999 and 2000, focusing its efforts on:

- Threats to biodiversity from tourism
- Approaches that demonstrate where tourism and conservation can be mutually supportive
- Involvement of the private sector, local and indigenous communities in sustainable tourism
• Regional and sub-regional collaborations
• Infrastructure and land-use planning for tourism that take biodiversity into account.

To coincide with these efforts, the United Nations has designated the year 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism.

While these high-level international political activities seem distant to the work of this group on Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic, their emphasis is remarkably consistent with the work of this group. It is clear that Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic is at the leading edge in terms of identifying the critical issues and also with respect to practical, on-the-ground implementation experience. There may be opportunities to take advantage of this by leveraging funding and other forms of government support and acknowledgement for local or regional activities.

5. **Independent Certification – What would it mean and what are some alternative voluntary incentive mechanisms?** The possibility of establishing a certification programme that could provide an incentive for environmentally responsible tourism in the Arctic (using the Principles and Codes of Conduct for Arctic Tourism developed by this group as a basis) has been raised at previous meetings and has received mixed support. In response to the desire expressed by participants at the Iceland meeting for more extensive and informed discussion of this question, WWF arranged for Laura Cooper to provide a presentation in which she described what certification is and what would be involved in establishing a formal independent certification process. Her report revealed that the process of establishing and managing an independent certification scheme for Arctic Tourism (such as an “Arctic Tourism Stewardship Council” as has been suggested in the past) has the potential to be a very complicated and very resource intensive undertaking, probably beyond the means of this group.

Ms. Cooper went on to describe several alternative approaches for creating incentives for voluntary implementation of, or adherence, to the Principles and Codes of Conduct for Arctic Tourism, such as:

• Self-assessment by tour operators (with or without evaluation and feedback by consumers)
• Membership organizations that require adherence to some set of criteria or standards for membership (like International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators)
• Government licensing programs
• Rating or scoring system
• Awards programme to reward best practice

Combinations or variations of these are numerous, and they could involve a greater or lesser degree of formality; be self-administered or managed by independent entities, depending on, among other things, the degree of credibility desired and resources available.

6. Samantha Smith (WWF Arctic Programme) briefly reviewed WWF’s rules for use of its name and logo generally and in connection with the Linking Tourism and Conservation project. With the prior written consent of WWF, pilot project participants may use the panda on their
promotional materials if it is accompanied by a text describing Linking Tourism and Conservation and the nature of the pilot project’s participation in it.

Discussions

Lessons Learned from 1998 Pilot Project Experience

At the February 1998 meeting in Iceland, participants selected pilot projects for the 1998 season for the purpose of testing the relevance, implementability, and measurability of the application of the Principles and Guidelines for Arctic Tourism. It was envisioned that the pilot projects would provide feedback to inform the continued exploration and development of effective mechanisms for achieving the potential for mutual benefits between tourism and conservation.

Reports were personally presented for seven pilot projects representing a diverse range of different types (land and ship-based), and scales of tourism activities in Canada, Iceland, Greenland, Svalbard and Norway:

Mareike Bollhorn & Peter Fabel, Nonni Travel, Greenland: Experiences in the Scoresby Area of Greenland (project done in cooperation with Kathleen Cartwright of Arcturus Expeditions, UK)

Jan Engstad, Jan’s Adventure Lofoten, Norway: Sub-Arctic Implementation and Challenges

Bärbel Krämer, Hapag-Lloyd Seetouristik BmbH, Germany: Results from Hapag-Lloyd’s Pilot Project

John Laird, WWF-Canada: Linking Tourism and Conservation in Nunavut - The Community Perspective

Dorothee Lubecke, Economic and Regional Development Agency of the Westfjords, Iceland: Pilot Project Experiences on Iceland

Elke Meissner, Greenland Tours, Greenland: Rodebay Pilot Project

Åshild Pedersen, Svalbard Polar Travel, Norway: Experiences from the SPOT Pilot Project on Svalbard

In presenting the pilot projects, particular emphasis was placed on identifying the lessons that can be taken from these experiences to inform future application of the Principles and Codes of Conduct. In particular, presenters were asked to describe what worked, what were the key challenges encountered in attempting to implement the Principles, and recommendations regarding future efforts both at the level of tour operations and also for the Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic project overall. These are summarized below.

What worked
• Pilot projects reported consistently that clients were receptive to and accepting of the substance of the Principles and Codes of Conduct for Arctic Tourism. It was generally felt that the Principles and Codes of Conduct provided a useful and effective educational and awareness-building tool. Clients appreciated the educational benefit of receiving printed copies of the Codes of Conduct.

• Having the Principles and Codes of Conduct available in several languages (currently English, German, Russian and Inuktitut) was a real benefit.

**Challenges**

• The lack of a common starting place, or level of familiarity with the Principles and Codes of Conduct as well as the overall purpose of the project was described as a significant challenge. The need to invest in an initial education phase to develop shared understanding, supportive relationships and buy-in among those who will be involved in implementation emerged as a larger task than initially anticipated. This requires a significant investment of dedicated resources in the form of time, money, and staff.

• Especially careful attention to the process of introducing the Principles and Codes of Conduct in local and indigenous communities is critical to their acceptance and successful implementation. Experiences in Nunavut and Greenland, in particular, highlighted this point. Time and care is needed to identify local interest and to develop partnerships for the introduction and implementation of the Principles in a way that is consistent with the needs and perspectives of the local cultural, economic and natural environment.

• A related challenge is the need for informed individuals at the level of direct interaction with tourists, who can act as champions and sources of information. Guides, expedition leaders, lecturers, local community leaders, and individual tour operators need to have some minimum level of awareness, understanding, and support for the Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic effort overall, and the applicability of the Principles and Codes of Conduct in the specific context of their activities.

• Sensitivity to the WWF affiliation with this project overall, and the Principles and Codes of Conduct specifically, presented a problem in some settings, especially highlighted in Iceland and potentially in Norway where WWF has played a highly visible role in the contentious issue of commercial whaling. In some situations, the WWF affiliation acts as a disincentive instead of an incentive to participation and implementation.

• The perception that there “is no real problem” in the Arctic was a challenge in some cases. The belief that there is plenty of unspoiled nature, and that the volume of activity is insufficient to significantly degrade it, leads some to conclude that no special care needs to be taken. In the absence of a common perception that there is a significant problem to be solved, there may be little incentive to take positive or preventive actions different from the status quo.

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4 Icelandic and Greenlandic translations are also anticipated.
• Measuring achievement of implementation of the Principles is a challenge. The need to assess the pre-implementation conditions in order to be able to observe and “measure” – whether qualitatively or quantitatively – changes resulting from implementation, adds yet another step to the already heavy burden in the planning phase. This can have many dimensions, including tracking changes in customer demands, operational behaviors, customer behavior, subcontractor behaviors etc. One mechanism for accomplishing this may include customer questionnaires or evaluations (including before and after trips).

• Some projects reported that some clients were “turned off” by the fact that they perceived the first Principle as a request for financial contributions to WWF. While we know that this is not the intent of the document, this perception has the effect of stopping some people from reading beyond the first Principle and learning more about and potentially supporting the effort.

• The term “Codes of Conduct” was perceived by some to be too strict or constraining. It was suggested that they be referred to as “guidelines” or some other term indicative of the fact that they are voluntary, not mandatory.

• Finally, some pilot project leaders noted that they felt they were very much “on their own” in conducting their efforts in the 1998 season and would have benefited from and appreciated more technical support and moral support, both from WWF and from other collaborators on the Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic project.

Recommendations

• Additional technical support to interested and motivated tour operators or communities could significantly increase the likelihood that others will attempt to implement the Principles and Codes of Conduct, and that those who are currently involved will continue and succeed. This could take several forms, all of which would be very useful:

  ➢ A guide for operators for implementation of the Principles and Codes of Conduct. This could include critical steps (drawing from lessons learned from these pilot projects) in planning; identification of roles and needs for different players (guides, subcontractors, community liaisons, etc.); and guidance on how to successfully include and collaborate with local communities.

  ➢ Educational material regarding the natural and cultural resources and conservation issues in different regions of the Arctic (including a reference list of resources, etc.).

  ➢ Compile a list of examples of what not to do, and explanations of why, to increase understanding of what constitutes a “disturbance” (e.g. don’t blow horns to see a cliff full of nesting sea birds take to the air all at once).

  ➢ An “Idea Book” describing different possible approaches to implementing the Principles.
Descriptions of good demonstration projects (could be based on these early pilot projects) including contacts to whom questions could be directed. These should highlight the range of diverse types of operations.

Guidance for marketing the Linking Tourism and Conservation efforts.

- A mechanism for collaboration on a geographic basis and/or by type of tour operations to formulate the adaptations of the Principles and Codes of Conduct to the different regions and operations to maximize their effectiveness.

- Consider revising or re-ordering the Principles and Codes of Conduct to avoid giving the initial impression that they are primarily a vehicle for soliciting funds for WWF – specifically the first Principle.

**Heidi Andersson 1998 Pilot Project Award**

On the evening of March 4, Peter Prokosch (WWF Arctic Programme) and Heidi Andersson (WWF-Finland Board of Directors) honored pilot project leaders with the Heidi Andersson 1998 Pilot Project Award. This award recognized the motivation and commitment demonstrated by pilot project leaders in applying the Principles and Codes of Conduct for Arctic Tourism, and their dedicated pursuit of the goals of linking tourism and conservation in the Arctic. Award recipients included:

- Nonni Travel (Mareike Bollhorn and Peter Fabel) and Arcturus Expeditions (Kathleen Cartwright) for the Scoresby Sound Project - Greenland
- Jann Engstad for the Jann’s Adventure Lofoten Project – Norway
- Dorothee Lubecki for the project “The Westfjords: Towards Sustainable Touristic Development” – Iceland
- Elke Meissner (Greenland Tours) for the Rodebay Project - Greenland
- Svalbard Polar Travel (SPOT) (Åshild Pedersen) for the Svalbard Pilot Project - Svalbard
- Hapag Lloyd Seetouristik (Bärbel Krämer)

**Future Direction**

In considering the desired future direction of the Linking Tourism and Conservation the Arctic project, participants drew on the information provided in presentations, lessons and recommendations from pilot project experience, and on their own individual and professional interests. Discussions related to the project’s future direction are summarized below.

**Certification and other incentive mechanisms for sustainable tourism.** There was little support among participants for establishing a new and independent organization to administer a formal certification and labeling process for Arctic tourism. However, several
participants expressed strong interest in exploring alternative incentive programmes, including some forms of certification. These included:

- Establishing a membership association for Arctic tourism, with membership contingent on adherence to the Principles and Codes of Conduct for Arctic Tourism. Membership in the association could be marketed for its environmental benefits.

- A self-assessment approach, possibly utilizing customer evaluations that would be submitted directly to some oversight organization or “control panel” (this could be a membership association) and that could provide the basis for a rating or scoring system.

- Independent certification to a minimum standard continues to be attractive to some participants, particularly because of its potential mass effect. While establishing and/or overseeing this approach is currently beyond the capability of this project, especially at an industry-wide scale, there was interest in examining the potential for integrating the interests of this project with other efforts that are either established or evolving, such as the Green Globe programme. Some felt that this should be considered for the long-term view.

- Establishing an awards programme to recognize tourism activities that achieve the goals of linking tourism and conservation in the Arctic was viewed as an incentive-generating effort that could be implemented relatively easily and soon. While an awards programme would not necessarily have the mass effect of an industry-wide certification programme, it would be more accessible to smaller operators, and could provide encouragement, visibility, financial support and marketing advantage to motivated operators, in the near term. It also represents an opportunity for increased visibility for the Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic project.

**Regional or type-of-tourism approaches to implementation.** Because Arctic tourism is so diverse - geographically, culturally, and logistically - there was wide support among participants for developing visions for, and approaches to, sustainable tourism that are specific to distinct regions and/or types of tourism. By adapting implementation of the Principles and Codes of Conduct to specific situations they can be applied and communicated more effectively. Workshops could be held in specific regions or localities to accomplish this. These workshops should be initiated locally (by, or with the assistance of, individuals or organizations participating in this partnership), and the WWF Arctic Programme could be invited to provide information and technical support, etc.

**Technical Support.** The need for technical support to individuals or organizations interested in implementing the Principles and Codes of Conduct for Arctic Tourism was strongly supported by workshop participants (see specific recommendations from Pilot Projects above). An additional suggestion was for WWF to develop a document that clearly articulates the WWF Arctic Programme conservation objectives and wherever possible identifies specific examples of linkages (and potential linkages) between tourism and these
conservation objectives. This would help tour operators or communities to identify opportunities in their specific situations that would be particularly meaningful from a conservation perspective.

**Marketing and Outreach.** The desirability of pursuing opportunities for increased exposure and visibility for the Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic project was emphasized at this workshop. Travel fairs and other tourism-related conferences were identified as especially promising venues for introducing the project to new audiences, identifying new collaborators and potential champions in new areas, geographically and sectorally within the travel and tourism industry. The project could be represented in these forums by WWF or by any of the operators currently involved who might attend such conferences or fairs. A further specific suggestion was to develop a simpler, briefer brochure describing the project, listing the ten Principles for Arctic Tourism, and notifying people of the awards programme (if and when it becomes a reality).

**Next Steps**

The WWF Arctic Programme will continue in the role of overall lead and secretariat for the Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic project for the foreseeable future. The lead contact for this project at the WWF Arctic Programme is Samantha Smith. A key role for WWF will be to maintain contact and share information with current pilot project leaders, using electronic mail and web-site links where appropriate. The WWF Arctic Programme will also assist with coordinating the efforts of Working Groups and Task Groups (see below) as needed, and as resources allow.

Additional activities on which the WWF Arctic Programme will take the lead include:

- **Awards Programme Development and Implementation.** WWF Arctic Programme will, as resources allow, explore the establishment of an awards programme designed to reward best practices in sustainable tourism in the Arctic.

- **Marketing,** including development and dissemination of informational and educational material, and exploring opportunities for and helping to coordinate Arctic Tourism Project exposure at tourism and travel trade shows, etc., consistent with recommendations from workshop discussions. The WWF Arctic Programme will take the lead, as resources allow. Seeking funding to develop a brochure profiling the pilot projects will be a priority. Other partners are encouraged to take advantage of marketing and outreach opportunities wherever possible.

- **Consider the possibility of further addressing some of the other technical assistance needs and recommendations that were identified at this workshop.**

In addition to the efforts of the WWF Arctic Programme, specific activities were identified that small groups will pursue following this workshop. Participation in these groups was assigned based on interest and willingness, but may be expanded as the needs of the groups and interest of other parties are revealed. These activities include:
1. Establish Working Groups to develop common visions and approaches for linking tourism and conservation in specific geographic regions and, where appropriate, for specific types of tourism activity. Working Groups identified to meet in the coming months include:

- Svalbard – WWF-AP, Andreas Umbreit, Ko de Korte, Åshild Pedersen
- Iceland – WWF-AP, Dorothee Lubeck, Arni Finsson
- Lofoten – WWF-AP, Jann Engstad
- Greenland – WWF-AP, Elke Meissner, Anne-Marie Mikkelson
- Ship-based tourism in the High Arctic – Ko de Korte, Bärbel Krämer, John Apps
- Russia – Ecological Travels Center
- Nunavut – WWF-AP and John Laird – will investigate local interest and seek local support
- Alaska – seek opportunities for greater involvement from this part of the Arctic – WWF-AP, Laura Cooper

These Working Groups may solicit the involvement of others as appropriate in developing approaches that are practical and supportable.

2. Three additional Working Groups will meet over the coming months to address:

- Exploration of local or regional tour guide education and/ or certification. WWF-AP, Jann Engstad, Dorothee Lubeck, John Laird, Laura Cooper
- Exploration of long term certification and incentive options. Niall Watson, Jeanne Pagnan, Laura Cooper, Andreas Umbreit, Jann Engstad, Frieda van Essen
- Strategic Planning and Management Plan Development for the Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic Project. WWF-AP, Dorothee Lubeck, Frieda van Essen, Jeanne Pagnan, Åshild Pedersen.

By distributing responsibility for specific tasks among different members or groups of members as outlined above, it was generally concluded that at this time there is no real need for the Interim Steering Committee that was established in the earlier days of the project to provide oversight and guidance for this collaborative project.

Finally, participants in this workshop, and others interested in collaborating on the Linking Tourism and Conservation in the Arctic project, will continue to be invited to meet on an annual basis to share information and experiences and to identify potential new efforts and activities. The next meeting will include reports from the Working Groups identified above, and any other related initiatives that emerge over the year. Participants provided the following preference with regard to timing and location of the next meeting:

- October to April timeframe avoids conflict with the Arctic Tourism season; the February-March timing of past years works well for most.
- Relatively easy to get to for the greatest number of people - Iceland may be best from this standpoint.
• Would be good to rotate among 3 major arctic regions (N. American, Russian and European). This provides opportunity for exposure to and involvement of additional partners. North America was suggested for next meeting (Alaska or northeastern Canada).
• To the extent possible, seek opportunities to “piggy-back” on other meetings that might involve some participants

Appendices
A - List of Workshop Participants
B - Workshop Agenda
C - Facilitator’s Flip Chart Notes