

The AECO initiated project “Environmental impacts of expedition cruise traffic around Svalbard” has been completed in a comprehensive report from Akvaplan-The report can be downloaded at: <http://www.aeco.no/documents/Finalreport.pdf>. A summary can be found on page 4 and 5 (English) and 6 and 7 (Norwegian).

The aim of the study was to evaluate the effects of today’s expedition cruise traffic in the environment around Svalbard. The main focus has been the marine environments but emission to air and consequences of landings have been briefly assessed.

Findings in this study are amongst other things:

- Expedition cruise ships have relatively minor impact on the Arctic marine environment
- There is a very high environmental awareness among ship officers, expedition teams and tourists
- Most officers are well up to date on prevailing laws and regulations and have focus on environmental friendly operations
- The expedition teams are generally well trained and supervise and monitor the tourists in a good way
- The guides have a very important task in relation to environmental friendly tourism
- The largest immediate threat to the marine ecosystem is large oil discharge, but the risk of accidents followed by oil discharges are relatively low and expected to be further reduced in coming years due to new mapping and technology
- As expedition cruise vessels run on MGO/MDO the consequences of a fuel discharges are very low compared to heavy fuel oil
- It is expected that 70-80 % all MDO/MGO will evaporate within 24 hours
- The western areas of the archipelago is most vulnerable to oil discharges

Mitigating measures/follow-ups have are suggested including:

- The need for clear ballast water treatment plans
- Use of environmental friendly anti-fouling paints
- Need for improved zodiac-driving training
- Requiring 4-stroke instead of 2-stroke engines on zodiacs

Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund has funded this study, which has been carried out by Akvaplan-niva, one of northern Europe's largest independent companies, provides services in environmental and aquaculture consultancy and research <http://www.akvaplan.niva.no/company/default.asp>.