



SVALBARD ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION FUND

# Clean Up Svalbard Cruise- feasibility study

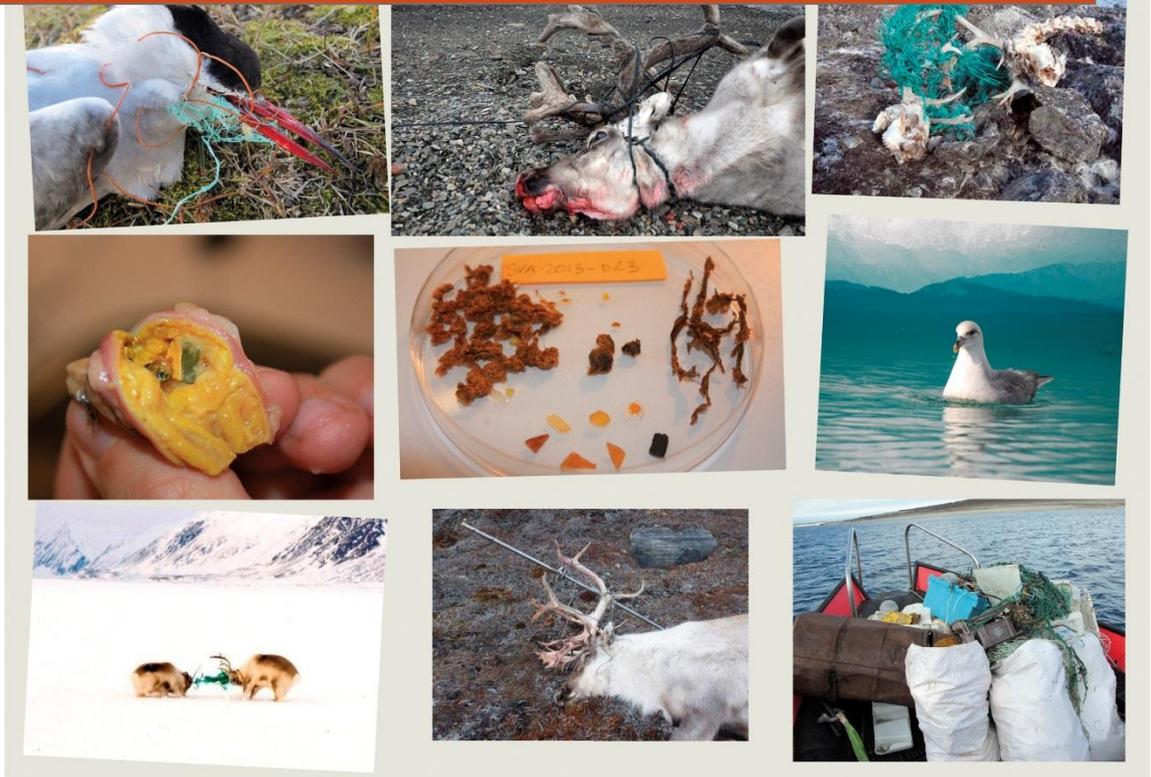


Photo-collage: Svalbardposten with photos from The Governor of Svalbard and Norwegian Polar Institute



## Summary

Sea-transported garbage is a major problem worldwide, also in the Arctic. The pollution is a problem for birds and animals and it kills fauna. It is also an esthetical problem.

The expedition cruise industry in Svalbard has since early 2000 contributed to cleaning of sea-transported garbage from beaches in Svalbard through the Governor of Svalbard's project, Clean Up Svalbard. Cleaning has been a small activity during landings.

Simultaneously has the Governor annually organized a boat trip for locals where cleaning of beaches has been the major activity. Very large amounts of garbage have been collected on these trips. The trips have been free of charge and the interest for participation among locals have been high.

This idea behind this feasibility study was to find out if there would be an interest and bases for organizing Clean Up Svalbard cruises (where the main activity is cleaning beaches) with paying passengers. This way the cruise industry and visitors to the Arctic could contribute to environmental protection.

Since late 2013 AECO has worked with this project in dialogue with especially cruise operators and the Governor of Svalbard to find a potential way forward. We have concluded that we would like to organize two test departures with Clean Up Svalbard cruises, with the potential of additional departures in the years to come. The test departures are depending on funding from Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund and an application will be filed in September 2014.





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## Background

Sea currents transport a lot of garbage to the beaches in Svalbard. Much of this garbage origin in the fishing industry, and fishnets, trawl balls and plastic dominates the picture.

The garbage is an esthetical problem in a pristine environment, but it is also a threat to wildlife. Animals are caught in fishnets and birds are known to eat plastic, this all with potential fatal consequences.

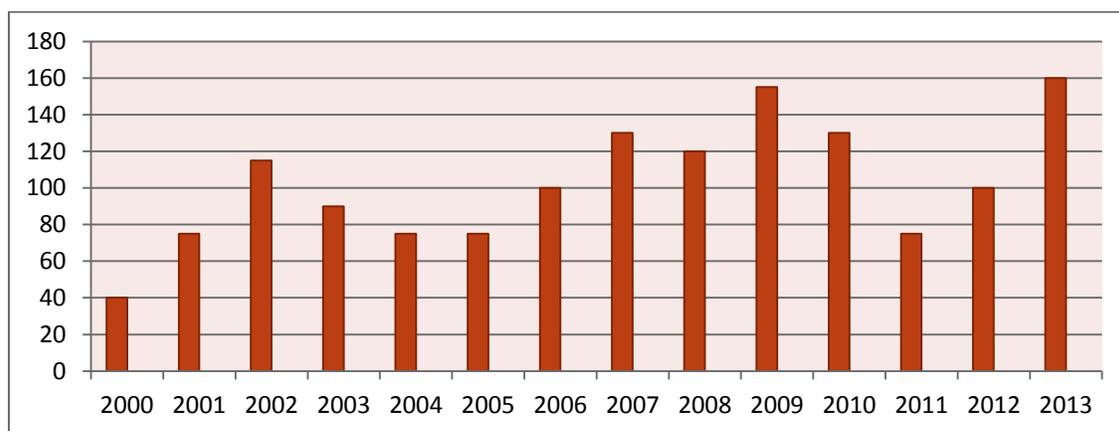
Several initiatives have been taken to help on the garbage situation in Svalbard.



Approximately ten years ago Oceanwide Expeditions, one of the expedition cruise operators with long history in Svalbard, turned to the Governor with a proposal to help clean beaches. This was the birth of Clean Up Svalbard project which since has been running as a cooperation between the Governor and the expedition cruise industry in Svalbard. While the Governor takes responsibility for overhead costs and garbage, each cruise operator invites their passengers to contribute a little during some landings. This is a very small activity of the cruise itinerary, and since cruise operators often return to the same beaches, the amount of garbage collected by each passenger is small. Over the years, however, the amount has become significant.

Simultaneously with Clean Up Svalbard, the Governor has also organized a beach cleaning for locals. During a week's boat trip, approximately 24 persons have had beach cleaning as their main activity. The trip has been free of charge and the local interest has been very good. Large amounts of garbage have been collected this way. The economic cost of such a cruise is large, and has been covered by the Governor of Svalbard

### **M<sup>3</sup> garbage collected by locals on the Governor's trip.**



Source: Governor of Svalbard

Late 2013 AECO and the Governor of Svalbard started to discuss the potential for organizing Clean Up Svalbard cruises. The idea is that passengers pay to be part of a Clean Up Svalbard cruise where the main activity during the cruise will be to collect garbage.

Based on experiences from the Governor's trips we picture that such cruises would have the potential of collecting large amounts of garbage. This would be major contribution from the cruise industry and visitors to Svalbard to environmental protection in Svalbard.

## Feasibility study

On this background, AECO decided to apply funding for a feasibility study to find out if bases could be found to organize Clean Up Svalbard cruises with paying passengers.

This included contacting cruise operators and asking for their interest in such a project, dialogue with the operators and the Governor of Svalbard to discuss ways of cooperation, considering other partners and consider logistics with special focus on the garbage. If bases for a project were in place, the feasibility study would include costs of a fullscale project.



The application was successful and AECO has conducted a feasibility study as described.

## Findings

### Operators

AECO turned to all members with a question of interest in such a project. While several showed interest, not all were in position to conduct such a cruise in their program. Some of the operators have itineraries planned for years to come, which cannot be altered. Other vessels are, due to size or design, unsuitable for the project.

When this had been regarded, we had two operators who were interested and have vessels suitable for the purpose.

1. **Oceanwide Expedition with the vessel “Ortelius”.** The vessel capacity is 116 passengers and it would be available for a Clean Up Svalbard cruise in August 2015. Oceanwide Expeditions is based in The Netherlands.
2. **G-Adventures with “Expeditions”.** The vessel capacity is 130 passengers and it would be available for a Clean Up Svalbard cruise in August 2016. G-Adventures is based in Canada/US.

Given financial support, both operators would be interested in a cooperation with AECO in a dialogue with the Governor of Svalbard to conduct a cruise with paying passengers. Both operators are also interested in using this opportunity to test if selling Clean Up Svalbard cruises may have a future without financial support from external funds.



This involves that the project is considered to have a potential of long-lasting positive environmental effect, but it is dependent on start-help from Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund.

When AECO has decided to move forward with two and not one departure, it is based on several considerations.

By involving two different companies over a period of two years, we believe this will give invaluable experience in regards to:

- Different internal organization and sales channels
- Different markets (Europe vs Canada/US)
- Different company partnerships e.g. connection to NGO's and sponsors
- Different cultures
- Two companies involved in a test-phase will increase the possibility of this developing into a permanent product
- Overhead costs will not double – they are the same regardless of one or two departures.
- Experiences from one departure can be used for the second departure within the limits cooperation between competitors set
- We believe the project will continue to develop and grow with experience, through the whole period.

The Clean Up Svalbard cruises are planned organized as approximately one week long cruises. The passengers will get approximately 20% discount to participate/on the ticket. For this discount, they are expected to work approximately four hours a day. Since both vessel carries more than 100 passengers, it is considered to be a too high number to organize cleaning on one

beach. Each departure will therefore divide passengers into two groups where one group clean while the other make an excursion in the morning. In the afternoon, the groups change places.

## Cooperation

### The Governor of Svalbard

AECO has considered a cooperation with the Governor essential for a successful project. The Governor is responsible for the running Clean Up Svalbard project described under “background” and has a lot of experience which the planned project is dependent on. For the industry, it was also necessary to feel confident that the authorities would like such a project to be carried out. Furthermore, when it comes to information – and later marketing, it is considered advantageous if the Governor is involved in the project.

AECO has had several meetings with the Governor regarding this project. One of the meetings also included representatives from the operators.

The Governor has also shared experience and provided a lot of information and material from their clean-up trips, which has been invaluable for this project.

The Governor will not be an equal partner in the project, but will help to develop the project. If AECO has success with funding application for a full-scale Clean Up Svalbard cruise, we are agreed with the Governor that they will be able to:

- Continue to share experience and information, which can be helpful for the project.
  - Provide information on relevant regulations and management.
  - Give inputs and ideas.
  - Help chose which areas/beaches are suitable for Clean Up Svalbard cruises.
  - Contribute to spread information about the project.
  - Help with contacts/connections.
  - Provide “Clean Up Svalbard” pins



As very valuable experience can be gained from participating in the Governor’s cleaning next year, they are willing to discuss if a representative from

each of the involved operators, can participate in the Governor’s cleaning. As “payment” for this participation, each of the operators will give at least one space, free of charge, to a local participant. This space can be part of the Governor’s drawing of participation in their clean up.

The Governor’s name cannot be used in a way that can lead to misunderstandings in regards to their role. In marketing e.g. it can be mentioned that the project is developed in dialogue with the Governor of Svalbard.

The Governor’s involvement will be through AECO, and not directly to operators.

### Operators – AECO

In addition to the dialogue with the Governor of Svalbard, a close cooperation between AECO and the operators is necessary. AECO will take responsibility for funding application and contact with the Governor. AECO will also help on work that is connected to overhead costs, developing information material - and especially garbage.

To give this project and work with the cleaning the attention we believe it deserves, we find it valuable to set aside some berths for non-paying passengers. This may be for partners and others involved in the project, but also for media, sponsors, VIPs and other.

There will be dialogue between AECO and the operators regarding the use of these berths.

### Others

It has been taken initiatives to find out if the project has potential of support from e.g. NGOs and patrons/VIPs. It is quite clear that the project has great potential in finding such partners. But it is also clear that the different companies have different cultures for such partnerships and may take individual initiatives in this regard. If granted funding, AECO will further discuss with the operators if and how additional project-partnerships may be established.

As mentioned above, berths have been set aside in the budget to accommodate for such involvement from others.

### Logistic

Based on experience from the Governor it has been possible to get a quite clear picture of the necessities in regards to logistics.



Equipment needed includes big-bags, bags, gloves, knives and potentially containers to store garbage in (can be rented in Longyearbyen)

Beach garbage typically includes plastic, trawl-balls, fishnets, some pallets/wood and some metal. The garbage will be collected from the beaches using small bags (ropes for trawl balls) that will be emptied in big-bags or containers. The garbage will be transported to the mother vessel using zodiacs/small boats. The vessel will transport the garbage to Longyearbyen for disposal at the garbage plant.

There has been a dialogue with the garbage plant in regards to capacity and way forward.

The amount of garbage cleaned is the most uncertain issue in this project. The plan is that each cleaning will be conducted by 50% of the passenger at a time for 4 hours times 2 per day. This involves that 50 persons may be working for 8 hours per day. It may result in large amount of garbage, but it will depend on the amount of garbage on the beach – and the working capacity of each participant.

The uncertainty has consequences on the budget, which is further described under the “Costs” heading.

## Costs

The budget for a full-scale Clean Up Svalbard project includes three main entries

1. Overhead costs which includes AECO’s work, information materiel, meetings, travel and equipment such as big bags, bags, gloves, etc. This cost is independent on number of voyages and amount of garbage.
2. Cost of each departure
3. Cost of garbage disposal

While it has been possible to calculate the first two items, the last item is not possible to calculate, as we do not know the amount of garbage that will be collected – or what it will include. Different garbage is priced differently. The Governor has paid up to NOK 200 000 per year for their disposal.

To conduct this full-scale project we will therefore depend on flexibility from Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund, where they guarantee funding of all costs of disposal. If granted funding, AECO would also like to work on other potential contributors covering costs of disposal. As the vast majority of the garbage comes from the fishing industry, we would like to address the fishing industry or their superiors with a request for support. This work will be started if and when the project is granted funding from Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund.

The total costs of the full-scale project will be approximately NOK 1 200 000 + garbage disposal. An application for a full-scale project will be submitted in September 2014.

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