

**AECO**



Association of  
Arctic Expedition  
Cruise Operators



# Clean Up Iceland

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The Expedition cruise industry's efforts to clean Icelandic shorelines

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# This is AECO

Dedicated to ensuring that Arctic expedition cruise tourism adds value to AECO's geographical area, while prioritizing concerns for the natural environment, cultural preservation, local communities, and safe operations both at sea and on land.



2003

Founded

69

International members

42

Operators

60

Expedition cruise vessels

Nunavut

Greenland

No  
Ter

Svalbard

Jan Mayen

Iceland



Northwest  
Territories

Nunavut

Greenland

**5 mill**

Km<sup>2</sup> size area

**165**

Communities

**1100**

Landing sites

Svalbard

Jan Mayen

Iceland



## What is an Expedition Cruise?

- Explorer format
- Flexible itineraries
- Independence of infrastructure
- Educational focus
- Nature and cultural experiences

# AECO's Pillars



**Environment**



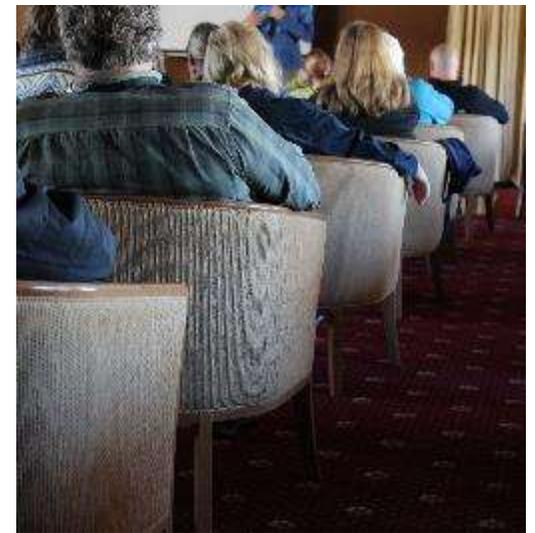
**Safety**



**Community**



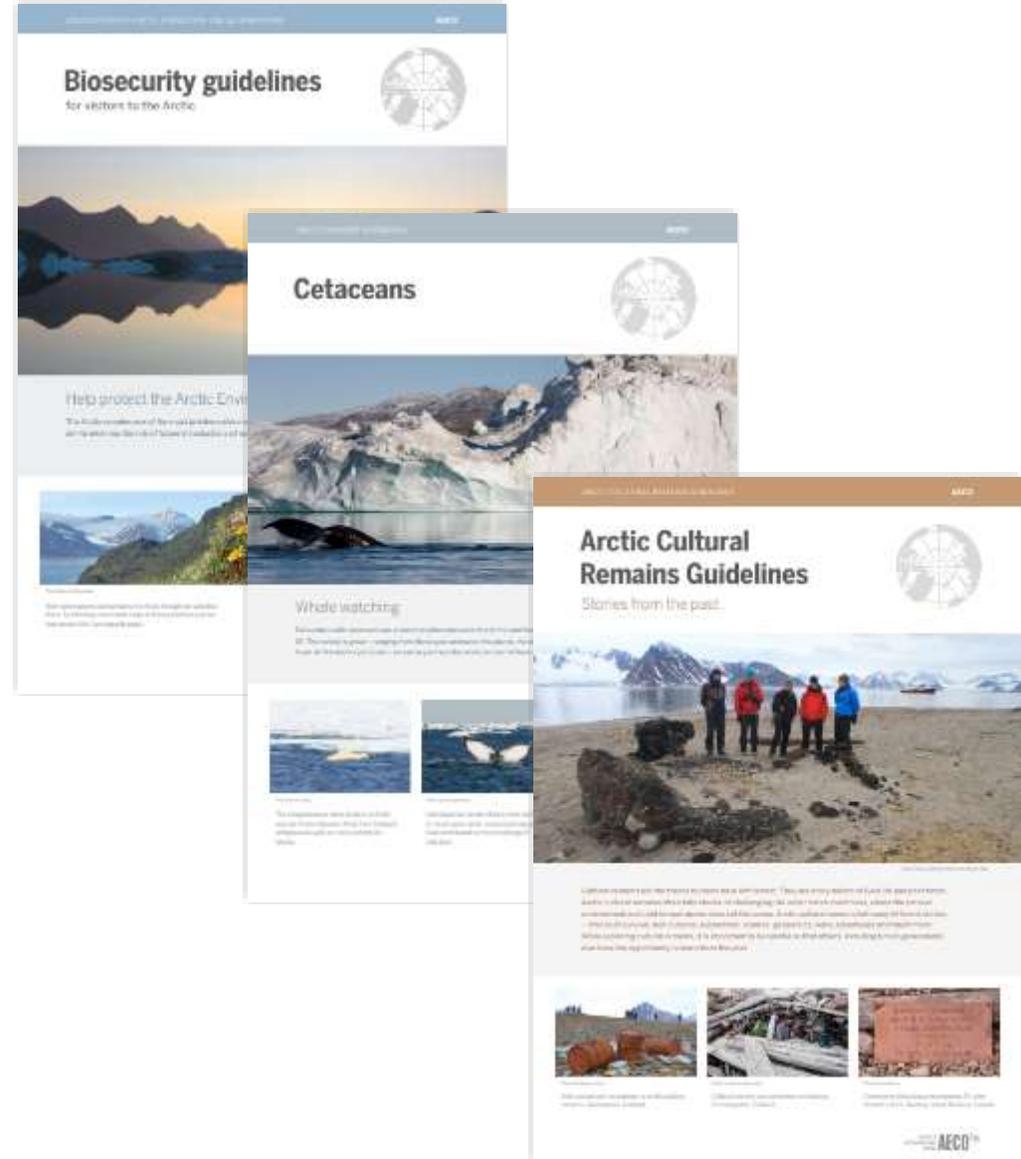
**Knowledge**



# Guidelines

Part of AECO's backbone is our more than 50 mandatory guidelines, that our members have agreed to follow, to ensure that operations are in accordance with our objectives.

Below is an guidelines animation aimed at guests visiting the Arctic:





# Environment



20 + years ago



2018



2023



20+ years ago



- Initiated by the expedition cruise industry
- Cooperation with the Governor of Svalbard
- Local partners – Cleanup Svalbard Forum

2018



2023



20+ years ago



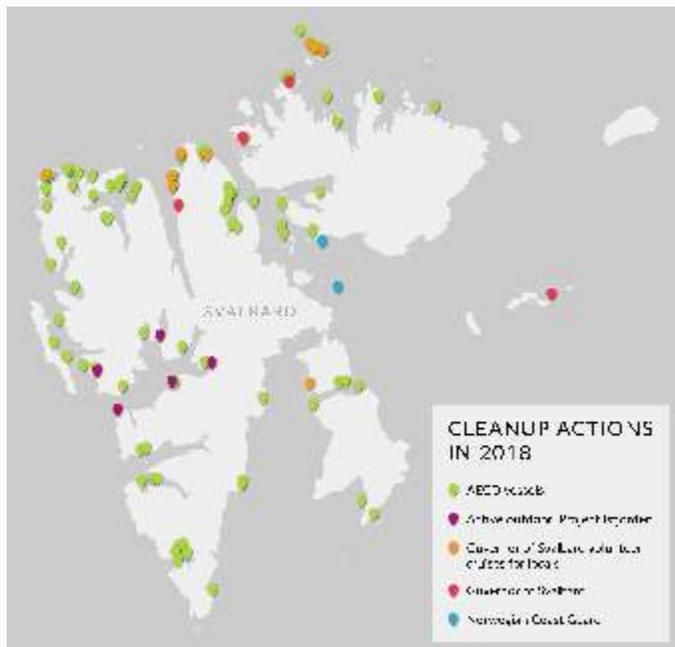
2018

2019

2023



Total of 195 cleanups reported involving +2,500 passengers



20+ years ago



2018



2022 2023



42 cleanups reported with  
+1,500 passengers



20+ years ago



2018



2019

2023



**80% of AECO members organize dedicated cleanups!**



20+ years ago



2018



2023



- Significantly reduce single-use plastics
- Enhance cleanup efforts
- Educate and motivate passengers, staff and crew
- Share knowledge and best practices

- Received NOK 3.6 million (USD 340,000)



20+ years ago

2018 2020 2022 2023



- Nearly all have made efforts to reduce
- Opportunity to learn from each other
- Clean Seas Assessments and best practices



Photo: Melissa



Photo: Sarah Auffre

### Eliminate plastic straws and stirrers

Or replaced with paper straws, metal spoons or bamboo mixers.



### Reusable water bottles

Replace single-use plastic water bottles with reusable bottles that guest, staff, and crew can refill on board. A water filtration system can be installed to help improve the taste of the water.



### Re-fillable condiment containers

Replace individually wrapped condiment and salt and pepper packets. Or opt for recyclable packaging if bulk is not available.



20+ years ago



ROKORPULVILLI HESTIÐ LÆPASTÍÐIÐ VINDUR SPJANAVIRI

AECO

### Clean up Svalbard

A joint effort to remove waste from the shores of Svalbard

**Join the Clean up Svalbard campaign**

Waste is carried by ocean currents and winds to the shores of Svalbard each year. For almost 20 years, residents and visitors have been encouraged to clean up marine debris when they visit the coast.

**What is Clean up Svalbard?**

- Almost 20 years ago, an expedition cruise company saw an opportunity to help clean up marine debris around Svalbard during voyages. The captain approached the Governor of Svalbard who offered regular support for the idea. The Clean up Svalbard was born, and more AECO members and local organizations got involved.
- In recent years, about 20 tons of waste have been removed from beaches in Svalbard every summer. Expectation has risen to between 3-4 tons per season.
- The Governor of Svalbard organizes dedicated cleanups to help the coast have a better look in the local area and also has additional events, mainly in Lofoten.
- According to studies of the collected waste in 2016 and 2017, 93-98% of it comes from the tourist industry.

2018 2019



ÁRÞRÓFURVILLI HESTIÐ LÆPASTÍÐIÐ VINDUR SPJANAVIRI

AECO

### Clean Seas Guidelines for Visitors to the Arctic

Tips to reduce your plastic footprint

**Be part of the solution**

When traveling to the polar regions, there are things you can do to reduce the amount of plastic and other waste produced. In the Arctic, you will find mostly areas with limited waste management facilities. Depending on your location, weather and local facility, or to transport and shipped elsewhere for treatment.

Your operator is working toward reducing single-use plastic in the operations. You could support these efforts and help avoid the long legs of your stay by reducing the number of disposable items you bring, the number of plastic water bottles, and the number of plastic items you can take to help the Arctic and help plastic from ending up in nature.

2023



20+ years ago



2018



2020

2023



## Clean Seas

The AECO® (Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators) and its members are working to combat single-use waste through:

**Discharge** Solvents to B&B and reduce single use plastic and paper waste.

**Onboard** Onboard garbage collection and reuse with industrial waste management.

**Landfill** Landing passengers to use or reuse plastic and paper.

**Take part in cleanup activities**

- Participate in clean up activities on shore
- Participate in beach clean up activities
- Participate in clean up activities on board
- Participate in clean up activities on land

**Leave no trace**

- Do not litter
- Do not use single use plastic and paper
- Do not use single use plastic and paper

**Choose reusable products**

Use reusable products for your next voyage. Use reusable products for your next voyage. Use reusable products for your next voyage.

20+ years ago

2018

2021

2023



20+ years ago

2018

2023



## Clean Seas Toolkit for Guides

### 1. Presentation materials

2. Marine litter ID Cards
3. Engagement ideas
4. Citizen science projects

How to contribute

Region specific

Arctic context

Global overview



20+ years ago



2018



2023



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**Tubes for plastic foil**

**Where does the litter come from?**

- used in lots of industries (including on fishing vessels below deck)

**How is it used?**

- rolled rolls of thin plastic film
- on fishing vessels: sheeting used for wrapping frozen fish below deck

**How does it get into the ocean?**

- no proper collection
- on fishing vessels: since they are being used below deck, it is likely discarded when not used anymore / plastic sheeting is empty

**What are the possible negative effects on wildlife?**

- entangling animals (wounds/death)
- wildlife could eat pieces of the item (if not fully broken up by the digestive tract, possibly causing starvation)



**Strapping bands**

**Where does the litter come from?**

- used in lots of industries (including on fishing vessels below deck)

**How is it used?**

- heavy machine or durable way of bundling products together
- on fishing vessels for the processing of the fish, bundles are used in small lines to pack fish, a few lines could be compressed below deck

**How does it get into the ocean?**

- bundles probably disintegrate and get unusable when they're stored for too long (get humid)
- strapping bands probably discarded as well, since they're probably too hard to use below deck

**What are the possible negative effects on wildlife?**

- entanglement (wounds/death)
- wildlife could eat pieces of the item (if not broken up by the digestive tract, possibly causing starvation)



20+ years ago



2018



2023



## Clean Seas Toolkit for Guides

1. Presentation materials
2. Marine litter ID Cards
- 3. Engagement ideas**
4. Citizen science projects

CHALLENGE  
ACCEPTED!



20+ years ago



2018



2023



## Clean Seas Toolkit for Guides

1. Presentation materials
2. Marine litter ID Cards
3. Engagement ideas
- 4. Citizen science projects**



20+ years ago



2018



2023



- Partnership with the Blue Army and Gára
- Identify potential location and obtaining permission from Landowners and Port Masters
- Community engagement opportunity



Photo: Violette Vauchelle

# Outcomes

## Recommendations for policymakers

Workshop report, which was published by the Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center featured the Clean Seas project



## Involvement in research - Malinor

Akvaplan-niva-led project to map marine litter in the Norwegian and Russian Arctic Seas



## Arctic cruise tourists assist plastic scientists

7 august 2019

[press release](#)

Next week Perrine Gerouldie from Akvaplan-niva joins a cruise from Longyearbyen to Franz Josef Land with the Russian cruise operator Poseidon. The name of the boat is Sea Spirit, the cruise lasts from 13-26 August and has 200 tourists on board. During the cruise Gerouldie will assist the tourists in collecting data on marine litter on the shore of the high Arctic, taking photos and adding the GPS location of the litter. She will also hold lectures for the tourists, on the Arctic ecosystem and introduce them to the plastic issue (macro-micro-nano) across the world, and in the Arctic. In September another Akvaplan-

## Involvement in research - SALT

Analysis of the origin, composition and distribution of marine waste



# Conclusion

- 20+ years of successful cleanup activities involving thousands of passengers
- Published several education materials and developing more
- Plans to continue and expand efforts to combat marine litter



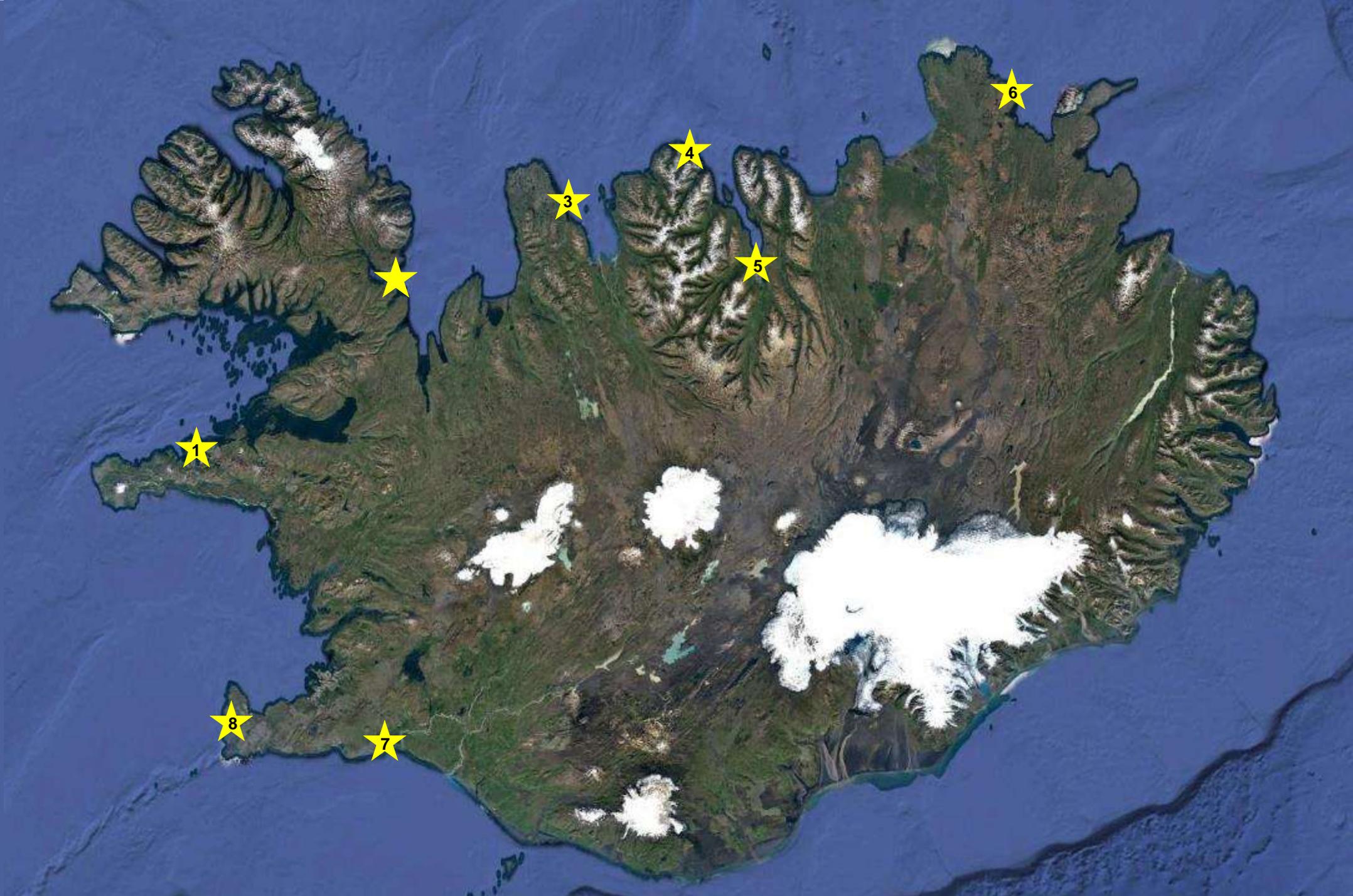




# Project activity timeline

	Winter 2022/2023	Spring 2023	Summer 2023	Fall 2023
Overview of coastal areas that need cleaning and obtain permissions	█			
Outreach with project partners		█		
Determine which AECO members want to participate		█		
Ask operators which areas they want to clean		█		
Review operators' requests for areas to clean and assign operators with areas		█		
Kickoff Event in Iceland		█		
Cleanup event post Kickoff Event with The Blue Army		█		
Develop a toolkit for operators and ELs for cleanups that are near community coastal areas		█		
Send shoreline specific cleanup information to operators		█		
Virtual meeting for all participants		█		
Cleanups take place!			█	
Cleanups are reported to AECO			█	
Gather feedback from operators and local representatives				█





1

2

3

4

5

6

8

7



www.aeco.no/clean-seas

www.aeco.no/clean-seas



Washing plastic and clean sea

caravela.coffee Certified  
IS MILAGROS  
RTB  
DO NOT USE HOOKS  
COSECHA 2021









# Areas of improvement



# Learnings from 2023

## Planning and permissions

- Connecting to more local cleanup entities
- Desire for “ad hoc” cleanups
- Community cleanups



## Waste disposal

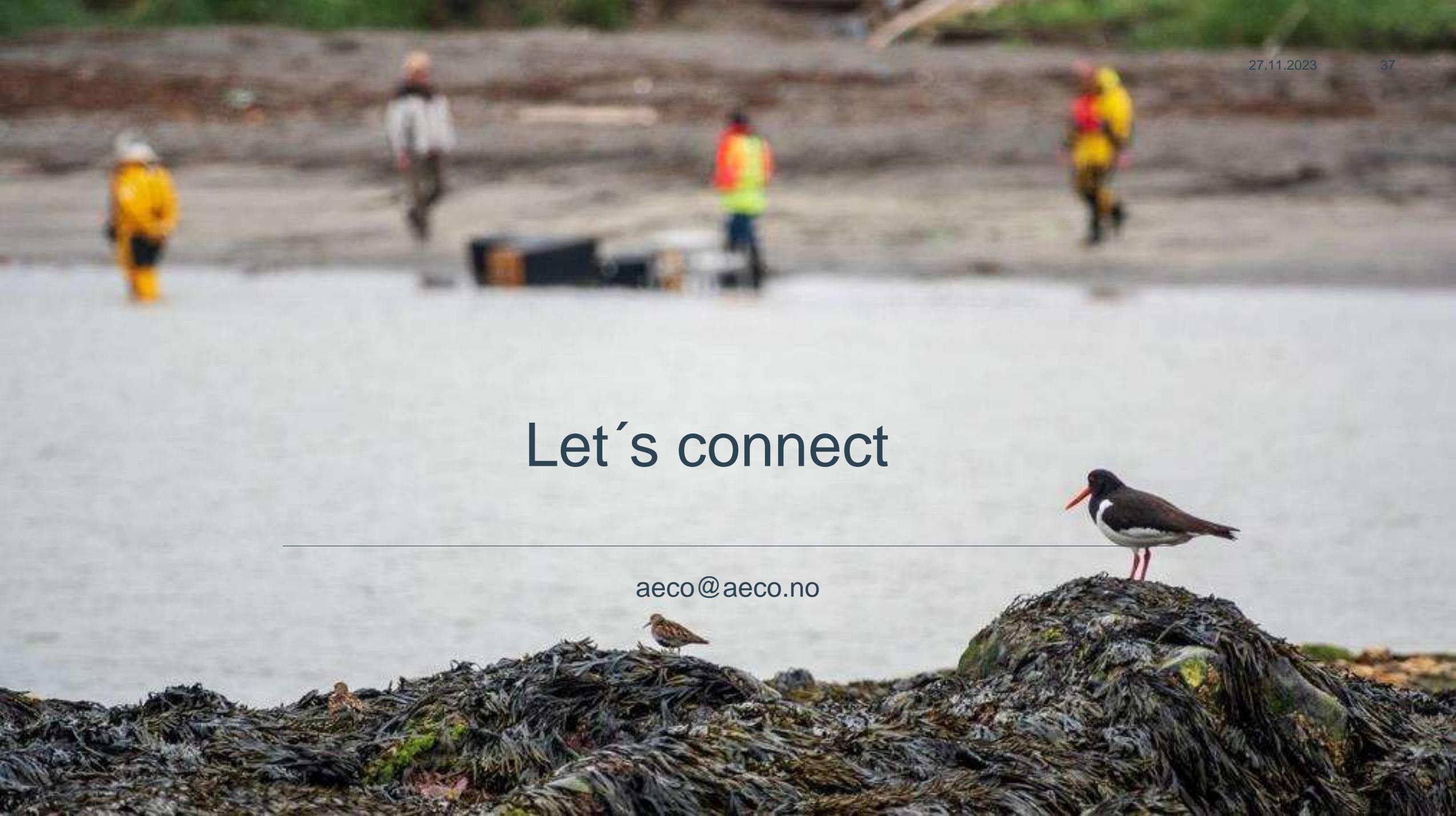
- Work on better solutions
- Look into partnerships
- Connecting to research



## Reporting

- Excel document to AECO and Governor
- Rent Hav webpage, PVR
- Post season survey. OSPAR.





Let's connect

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