

Excerpt from April 24 Stakeholder meeting notes

***Requested information: What training/info do we provide to guides for accuracy?  
(cruise ships category)***

Harvey also addresses this question in his handout, and explains to the group that from his research he has discovered that most of the local companies that provide guided tours give their guides some time of training. Harvey highlights the AK Naturalist course taught every year at UAS provides excellent training to lots of people in Sitka, including Tribal Tours, rangers, Allen Marine guides and others. The Historical Society is working on setting up a certification system for guides. The Forest Service and Park Service train their guides for 2 weeks or more, and Tribal Tours has an intensive 70-hour program for their guides. Harvey says he expected a lower standard, but it's really high – he was impressed with the quality of guide training.

Q: Did anyone mention that in their training they include a section about addressing culture and economy questions?

A: Those are difficult questions to answer, such as what is Sitka's economic base and detailed questions about history and culture – don't know of any explicit training, but from what I understand, it's part of Forest Service and Park Services training, and maybe part of the UAS Naturalist program.

Q: I think the intent of the original question was if there are any holes in the training, people that are guiding but aren't being trained.

A: There are gaps, yes – there are guides from the cruise ships that lead tours with erroneous information.

There is some discussion about whether the SH want Harvey to identify those gaps more clearly. One SH points out that in the big picture, when thinking about writing a tourism plan, the issue is not what the gaps are specifically, but to know that there are some and perhaps we'll want to include a vision for creating a mechanism where we train all guides to provide consistent information.

For now, the SH agree that it's good enough to know there are gaps – when we get to the solution phase, we may want to address those gaps. The topic receives a red dot and is closed for now.