

AECO awarded grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation to strengthen industry measures on underwater noise and wastewater management in the Arctic

Tromsø, March 23, 2026 — The Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO) has been **awarded a US\$499,000 grant** from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation to advance the work its members unanimously endorsed at the most recent Annual General Meeting: strengthening measures to reduce **underwater radiated noise (URN)** and improving **wastewater management** across the Arctic expedition cruise industry.

AECO represents expedition cruise operators in the Arctic, and its members have long been among the frontrunners in establishing binding best-practice guidelines for responsible operations in Arctic environments. This significant two-year investment provides AECO with dedicated capacity to build on that work and deliver coordinated, practical measures that strengthen both environmental protection and predictable operating conditions for the industry.

From knowledge to operational solutions

“We are deeply grateful for this support,” says **Frigg Jørgensen, Executive Director of AECO.**

“The grant is a clear signal of trust in AECO’s competence and in our ability to bring the industry together around practical, operational solutions that can make a real difference. Underwater noise and wastewater management are increasingly important topics for Arctic shipping. This funding allows us to turn existing knowledge into concrete guidance and help our members reduce their footprint while continuing to offer safe and responsible expedition cruises.”

With growing attention from the **International Maritime Organization (IMO)** and Arctic states to underwater noise and vessel discharges, coordinated and evidence-based strategies for Arctic operations are increasingly important. As part of the project, AECO will work with members, researchers, Indigenous representatives, NGOs and other partners to identify practical pathways for noise reduction and strengthen alignment on blackwater and greywater practices.

Strengthening AECO’s role as an industry voice

The grant strengthens AECO's role as a key provider of knowledge, bringing operational experience into policy development. By supporting targeted external communications, the project helps ensure that the industry's operational realities are reflected in relevant IMO and Arctic-focused processes.

"This grant is a strong vote of confidence in our members and the course they unanimously set at our latest Annual General Meeting," says Karin Strand, Chair of AECO's Executive Committee.

"It will help us deliver on that mandate by supporting industry efforts to reduce underwater radiated noise and promote best practices in wastewater management for Arctic expedition cruise ships."

About AECO

The Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO), headquartered in Tromsø, Norway, is a membership organization that represents expedition cruise operators in the Arctic. AECO works to ensure that expedition cruise tourism benefits the regions visited by prioritizing environmental protection, cultural preservation, community engagement, and safe, responsible operations.

About the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation

Gordon and Betty Moore established the foundation to create positive outcomes for future generations. In pursuit of that vision, we advance scientific discovery and environmental conservations. Visit Moore.org and follow [@MooreFound](https://twitter.com/MooreFound).

Contact AECO:

Head of Communications

Jon Engenes

jon@aeco.no

Tph: +47 93467654

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