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ECO



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WHEN IS AN MPA NOT AN MPA?

SUNSET FOR MARINE PROTECTION

As CCAMLR Members engage in the process of drafting conservation measures for the Ross Sea and East Antarctic MPA proposals, it has emerged that many members believe that these proposals should be time-limited. We aren't just talking about reviewing the management plan at specified intervals, it seems. Some text suggests that after a certain period of time, the Commission would be required to undertake a new decision on whether to renew the MPA. Thus consensus on the MPA would have to be achieved all over again.

ECO is a bit puzzled by these "sunset" proposals. Under the Environmental Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty, ASPAs and ASMAs are not required to have any such clauses, although management plans must be reviewed every 5 years. At last year's CCAMLR meeting when such provisions were proposed, one Member noted that there is no similar rule for any MPA anywhere else in the world. Indeed, the Great Barrier Reef and Galapagos Islands have been permanently designated as protected. On land there is a similar situation. There are no time limits on protection for the Grand Canyon, Mt. Fuji, or the Serengeti. ECO is unaware of any marine protected areas that have an expiration date.

Time limits on management plans are entirely appropriate, since they must adapt to changing circumstances. But what kind of legacy would CCAMLR leave if all the hard work to identify areas deserving of protection could simply fade away in a few decades because one Member changed its mind? Within their own countries Members certainly would not want to leave their national treasures so vulnerable.

ECO entirely agrees that CCAMLR must regularly monitor what is going on in MPAs to ensure that they are meeting the goals for which they were designed. That is best accomplished through regular review of the management plan and options to change protection levels, not through mandatory expiration and renewal provisions for the

Conservation Measure. Antarctica's marine treasures meet the same criteria as the Great Barrier Reef and the Galapagos Islands, and they deserve the same protection. If CCAMLR wants to leave a true legacy of marine protection, and continue its global leadership in the arena of marine conservation, it should follow global best practice in designating MPAs without time limits.

CCAMLR IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The media spotlight on CCAMLR is intensifying, with more major publications weighing in on the critical decisions on the table in Hobart, Australia. Over 200 stories have hit the media around the globe since the meeting began.

In the US, *The New York Times* published an editorial titled "A Chance to Save the Southern Ocean," in which they urge CCAMLR Members to seize the opportunity to protect the unique, "ecologically rich" waters around Antarctica. "At a minimum, the areas proposed in the Ross Sea and around East Antarctica should be protected; better still if the larger areas recommended by conservationists are included." *The Washington Post* reported that the "international push to create a giant marine sanctuary in Antarctica has gotten a big boost" due to the emergence of a joint proposal for a Ross Sea MPA from the US and New Zealand.

New Zealand is closely following developments with a TV news crew arriving in Hobart on Tuesday and newswire *Scoop* running a story titled: "Cry for Antarctic marine protection in final week of CCAMLR" highlighting the call by the great, great, great granddaughter of the man who discovered and explored the Ross Sea, Sir James Clark Ross, for far-reaching Ross Sea protection at the ASOC/AOA luncheon for Delegates on Monday.

International coverage of the CCAMLR meeting includes a blog in *Nature*, an interview with Jim Barnes on IUU fishing and stories via Google, Yahoo and MSN.

CCAMLR Facebook page “Likes” continue to grow and are now at 12,499. Entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson has been tweeting his support in recent days to call for real protection for the Southern Ocean, adding his voice to the more than 1.2 million around the world who have taken action on the issue. It is positive to see growing awareness about what’s at stake at CCAMLR as Delegates consider designating MPAs in the Southern Ocean.

NO DATA, NO FISH

Some CCAMLR members have been placing a very high bar on the science required for marine protected area to be approved. ECO wonders whether fishing activity will be required to meet that high bar as well.

CCAMLR has been grappling with research requirements in low information fisheries. If the standards posed by some members for scientific justification for MPAs were to be applied to fisheries management, how much fishing would there be in Antarctica? ECO suspects the answer is “zero”.

As the Guardian noted in its obituary of John Heap, the legendary UK Antarctic representative for many years: “Heap's efforts in the marine living resources convention, to establish the first ecosystem-based fisheries management system, were also motivated by conservation and sustainability objectives. He will be remembered for frequently using the phrase "no data, no fish". In other words, no fisheries should be allowed unless there was the scientific basis on which to manage them”.

The failure of the tagging regime in large parts of Antarctic waters to provide useful data to sustainably manage Antarctic toothfish stocks brings into question some Members’ commitment to research before conducting commercial fishing.

So far CCAMLR’s exploratory fishing regime has in most places been an excuse for commercial fishing. Many members want to fish in Antarctic waters but only a few front up with research and analysis.

It is time that CCAMLR ended this commercial fishing “in drag” and returned to the commitment to “No data, no fish”.

REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM OF ONE?

ECO reminds delegates that countries made a commitment to establish a representative system of marine protected area by 2012. So far only one marine protected area has been established, for the South Orkneys.

ECO reminds delegates that in 2008 the Scientific Committee identified 11 priority areas. The Commission endorsed the Committee’s recommendations, setting the stage for the extraordinary amount of focused work the past four years.

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