

# ECO



**An NGO Newspaper Published for the Twenty-Third Meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources**

## **KEEP OUT!**

ECO has noticed a large number of observers milling about the corridors of the casino this week. They seem to have an unusual amount of free time. What are Parties hiding?

ECO is concerned that CCAMLR is going back in time by not allowing observers to participate in the debate on important issues regarding Antarctic conservation. Parties have made it clear that observers can not attend intersessional working groups. This seems a bit ridiculous, given that the NGO and IGO community have considerable expertise on some issues that could contribute to the debate.

ECO has learned that the debate in the Commission plenary so far this year has been mainly anecdotal and debate on controversial issues was severely limited. We hope that deferring debate on controversial issues to secret back rooms isn't a trend. CCAMLR seems to be moving away from good governance with less transparency in the deliberations, and allowing limited access to information.

ECO welcomes the joint proposal from Australia and Chile to hold a symposium on CCAMLR's objectives in the new millennium. The voice of the civil society must be present in this important event.

## **MPA's – WHEN but not if**

ECO is pleased to note that CCAMLR is responding to the global momentum to identify and implement Marine Protected Areas in all area of the marine environment.

ECO would like to point out that there is a wealth of knowledge already available upon which to draw. CCAMLR needs to bring together experts from the scientific community, the IGOs and Non-governmental organisations with experience of participation in many MPA workshops around the world.

CCAMLR must ensure that they do not ignore or exclude these experts who can add value MPAs.

## **IUU Vessel Lists: Laundering vessels**

ECO welcomes proposals to make all CCAMLR vessel lists public, especially the IUU vessel list, and urges delegates to agree on this important transparency measure. We are also pleased to hear of the support for CCAMLR requiring information on beneficial owners. It is important that members share this critical information with other governments and RFMOs. ECO remains deeply concerned, however, at the ease with which beneficial owners of vessels involved in IUU fishing can simply change a vessel's name, reflag to a CCAMLR member and then notify participation in a new and exploratory fishery, thus subverting CCAMLR's admirable efforts at containing IUU fishing. If this trend continues, there will be more IUU vessels in CCAMLR's exploratory fisheries than on CCAMLR's IUU vessel lists.

Furthermore, it's time for CCAMLR to adopt Norway's approach to blacklisting – permanently banning fishing vessels deemed to have been involved in IUU activities – and inviting all FAO members and all RFMOs to exclude all such listed vessels from fisheries within their jurisdiction and control.

## **Quality NOT Quantity**

The sheer number of notifications for new and exploratory fisheries recently is of great concern to ECO, especially when many vessels in these fisheries fail to meet their obligations to comply with CCAMLR conservation measures and research requirements.

New and exploratory fisheries need to be performed in such a manner that guarantees the collection of sufficient high quality data to conduct a robust stock assessment. The suggestion that vessels should be limited to a certain number per country will not guarantee the return of quality data to CCAMLR. ECO would like to see CCAMLR, and its appropriate working groups, develop criteria for limiting vessel numbers for new and exploratory fisheries, that favour vessels that have either proven or promised full

compliance with conservation measures and research requirements.

### **58 4.1 & 2 TACs and closed areas**

In accordance with CCAMLRs precautionary approach to setting catch limits in all fisheries, ECO believes that it would be unjustifiably risky to set a high TAC for 58.4.1 and 58.4.2 when there is no scientific basis for such a decision. ECO urges delegates to maintain current TAC levels. We are particularly encouraged to hear that the proposed precautionary approach involves closing entire sectors of the two subareas.

### **Get off my bottom!**

Bottom trawling has been proven to be a highly destructive fishing practice. Marine scientists from around the world have joined together to express their profound concern that bottom trawling is an especially grave threat causing unprecedented damage to vulnerable deepwater ecosystems.

In deep-sea areas, bottom trawling has destroyed vital coral communities and serially depleted target fish stocks associated with seamounts. UNICPOLOS and the CBD have recognized the vulnerability of these fragile ecosystems and called for urgent action to ensure their conservation. Taking that into account, a Deep Sea Conservation Coalition is urging the UNGA and other relevant RFMOs to call for a Moratorium on Bottom trawling in the High Seas. CCAMLR's mandate is to maintain the productivity of marine species and ecosystems in the Southern Ocean. We can no longer delay taking action. CCAMLR should reject any new proposal for initiating a bottom trawl fishery in the Convention Area.

### **cVMS and eDCD**

We wonder why some parties are opposed to a system of centralized VMS. Vessels that can prove they've fished legally by providing evidence of their locations throughout the fishing trip, will gain advantage in the market place and access to markets of states participating in the VMS. If vessels are fishing legally, as claimed by flag states, why wouldn't they want documentation to prove it? We urge the Commission to adopt a centralized VMS that reports data directly to the CCAMLR Secretariat.

We would like to offer our sympathy to the USA, though not for the reason you might suspect...it looks as if the USA will be left with no choice, once again, but to take unilateral action to prevent IUU toothfish from entering its market. Despite a successful trial of an eDCD, the Commission appears to be unwilling to adopt a mandatory eDCD system. This system is less expensive than the paper system, and more difficult to create false documents. We can understand the frustration of the USA, and could hardly blame them if they resorted to unilateral action and accepted only electronic catch documents. We urge CCAMLR to take prevent this by adopting an eDCD.

### **48.3 TAC: Are you certifiable???**

ECO is concerned and frankly flummoxed that the UK delegation is arguing that the model for setting a TAC that CCAMLR has always used is flawed, especially when that same model was perfectly acceptable when it yielded the 7810 tonnes TAC for the 2002/2003 fishing season. Furthermore ECO is astonished that instead of trusting a model that has been used for decade, that we are only now finding flaws in, the UK would prefer to use estimates based on the tagging experiment that is not proven. Of course, the problem here is not only that the model is completely untested it is more an issue of the precautionary principle and consistency in applying it to all CCAMLR fisheries. It is clearly an attempt to keep the fishery open, regardless of the health of the stocks and will set a terrible precedent for future setting of TAC's for the rest of CCAMLR.

However, once again this year, the Scientific Committee has abandoned making a decision and for the second year in a row, the TAC for the toothfish fishery in area 48.3 will be a political decision rather than a scientific decision. Both years, the Scientific Committee merely stated that 'here are some various numbers and here's how we came up with them' and have left it to the Commission to make a decision. This is not conservative, precautionary, nor scientific. But more distressing is that ECO has heard that delegates are not looking at ALL the numbers that the Scientific Committee has generated. Remember the first time the actual data was run in the CCAMLR model the result indicated a 0 TAC. Therefore ECO is of the mind, that if delegates are going to engage in the setting a non-precautionary TAC, the starting negotiating number must start with 0 and then move, only marginally above there.

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**ECO**

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