

ECO



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40th Commission on the Conservation of Antarctic Meeting Living Resources Meeting

Conservation™: Bringing life and hope (b.l.a.h.) to the Southern Ocean

It is well-known that the CAMLR Convention is tasked with the Conservation™ of marine life in the Southern Ocean.¹ Through its many different actions CCAMLR and its bodies and Members take action for the Conservation™ of the Southern Ocean, be it with respect to krill, finfish, IUU fishing, MPAs, or that pesky little matter of climate change (Note to self 11 October 2021: remember to update 2009 climate change Resolution).

Naturally, there are some practical reasons for which progress might be slow sometimes. You need two to tango, and we are like 26, so it is not easy to agree on our next move. Also, it is rather difficult to protect something in the water while at the same time taking it out of the water.

Krill, for instance, is abundant in the Southern Ocean, or so we think, but the best fishing spots are highly localized. Why on earth go fishing somewhere else? But with Conservation™ we can achieve the delicate balance that our Founding Members aimed for, by which you take a little, and then some more.

With finfish things are a bit different than with krill. It is worth more money. There is a lot of them (still), but they are more dispersed, so we need to find out where the best spots are, least we miss out some fishing opportunities. What a better way to find this out than doing some research fishing in some areas, and keep doing it until we know enough to establish a proper fishery? Again, Conservation™ helps to keep things in balance.

We understand that there is a potential for IUU fishing in the Southern Ocean, which is why we have some tracking mechanisms such as vessel monitoring systems (VMS) (so that authorities know where ships are, and what are they up to) and Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) (so that ships can see where other ships are, which is helpful when you move from A to B). The

good thing is that VMS is private – very few people know where the fishers are, and they keep it to themselves, even if IUU is suspect. Conversely AIS is too public, so fishers switch it off to protect their knowledge of where they are fishing, so those that are too lazy to find fish themselves do not also show up at the best spots. Sure, sailing with the AIS off is like driving at night with no lights, but hey, it is a big ocean out there.

Marine Protected Areas are a great idea, or so they say. Unfortunately, most MPA proposals are in places where we are already fishing or where we think we might want to fish in the future. Why don't they put those blessed MPAs in the middle of the ocean? Anyway, we need more information before making that kind of decisions. You can never know enough. At any event, krill and fish are go getters who move around, which is exciting, whereas MPAs are boring little squares (or worse: large squares) right on top of the most desirable real estate, getting in everybody's way. But don't worry, we'll deal with MPAs in due time, once again bringing life and hope (b.l.a.h.) to the ocean through Conservation™.

Finally, there is the issue of climate change. Climate change is affecting the entire planet, not only the Southern Ocean. This is an urgent issue, if we are to believe some young troublesome activists (quite disrespectful little bastards too: they say that decision makers speak empty words like "blah blah blah"). According to the science, we are running out of time to address climate change. On that we'll have to agree: we'll deal with it next year.

¹ Conservation™ is a trade mark of CCAMLR It includes Rational Use® which is a registered trade mark of CCAMLR.

40 YEARS OF CCAMLR

The Antarctic Treaty recognizes the responsibility of its Contracting Parties for the preservation and conservation of living resources in Antarctica a.k.a. terrestrial and marine life. The CAMLR Convention was agreed to act on this responsibility, and it was an exciting time 40 years ago when the first CCAMLR meeting occurred. After all, it was barely more than a decade prior when America's Cuyahoga River caught on fire due to heavy pollution. Overfishing had caused dramatic collapses in fisheries around the world. There was not exactly a strong global environmental protection ethic. And yet, here newly minted CCAMLR Members were, talking about the precautionary principle and the ecosystem approach. Not exactly common concepts at the time. A new era had arrived, in which humans finally realized the benefits of trying to stay out of nature's way instead of adding impact upon impact until something collapsed.

CCAMLR faced its own unique challenges in that regard, and acted to close some rapidly declining fisheries (which by the way haven't even recovered 40 years later, demonstrating the need for extra caution with Antarctic species). It's also dealt with massive illegal fishing and seabird bycatch over the years, among other issues, and succeeded admirably.

As CCAMLR implemented its principles, it garnered a lot of praise. Unlike RFMOs where debates took place over whether the scientifically recommended catch limit should be doubled (!), CCAMLR was aiming to make Southern Ocean ecosystems better, not worse.

So, ECO would have expected that as we entered an era of global environmental catastrophes, CCAMLR would be ready to respond. Unfortunately, it has gone backwards.

The science on climate change has piled up – much of it driven by Antarctic research, no less – but CCAMLR Members want to argue about which organization is the proper forum for discussing the issue. As if such a global phenomenon respects the delineations dreamed up by lawyers.

The widespread loss of biodiversity is becoming increasingly apparent – but CCAMLR Members are focused on preserving opportunities for exploitation. Never mind that that kind of attitude is what got us in a biodiversity crisis in the first place. The 30% target proposed for oceanic MPAs only leaves 70% for fishing and other human activities – how limiting!

CCAMLR is flailing about like a person drowning when the world needs CCAMLR to be a rescuer in a lifeboat, acting decisively to get things done and accomplish its conservation mission.

CCAMLR REPORT ARCHAEOLOGY: RAIDERS OF THE LOST WORD

CCAMLR has added a new science to its quiver, and a new approach to decision making: CCAMLR report

archaeology! This is a fascinating discipline, a subfield of historical archaeology. While not as flashy as to inspire an Indiana Jones-type of movie – not yet at least – it does involve digging into CCAMLR reports that have been done and dusted for decades and finding cryptic passages that – who knows – upon closer reading might reveal us the true meaning of texts.

A comma here or there, an old-fashioned term with a new meaning, two words put together (like “rational use”), something said in passing that was included in a report...Seemingly minor content from the past, transported through several decades, hundreds of documents, and thousands of pages, can resurface in the present and completely alter long held interpretations of what CCAMLR is all about.

Of course, this would not be only about academic interest, but the finding of a lost word could potentially transform how we look at the Southern Ocean and what decisions CCAMLR makes. The search is on...



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SC-CAMLR 2021 Bingo

What the flux?	Translations don't come through on correct channel	Ignoring climate change in one of fastest warming places on earth
Politics disguised as "science"	Can you hear me okay?	Accidental cussing into microphone
No pizza or beer from The Duke during/after long report adoption	conservation ™	Pet noises

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