



CCAMLR

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Commission pour la conservation de la faune et la flore marines de l'Antarctique
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The Seas Must Live: Marine Protected Areas Now

Submitted by ASOC



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Abstract

Despite the global coronavirus pandemic, there is increasing political momentum to address pressing environmental issues including the protection of the Southern Ocean. In addition to major statements of support for Antarctic MPAs from global leaders, ASOC and its partners have collected 1.5 million signatures on petitions calling for the designation of Antarctic MPAs in 2021.

ASOC therefore recommends that CCAMLR-40 answer these calls for action by:

1. Adopting the East Antarctic MPA (EAMPA) with no limit to its duration, incorporating all three proposed areas (MacRobertson, Drygalski and D'Urville Sea-Mertz).
2. Adopting Phase 1 of the Weddell Sea MPA (WSMPA) and work towards adopting Phase 2 no later than 2023. MPAs resulting from Phase 1 and Phase 2 should not have a limit to their duration.
3. Adopting the Domain 1 MPA (D1MPA), with no limit to its duration, including the extension of no-take zones to all areas previously identified as critical, such as the areas around Elephant Island, to ensure conservation objectives are met.
4. Continuing work to establish a representative system of comprehensive, adequate and representative MPAs, with significant no-take areas and no limits to their duration, across all planning domains in the Convention Area including Domain 9, the corridor connecting Sub-Antarctic islands in Domains 4, 5 and 6, and the additional four zones within the original East Antarctic MPA proposal.

Introduction

In 1982, renowned biologist Dr. Sidney Holt provided a paper titled “The Seas Must Live” to the IUCN’s World National Parks Congress. The paper’s abstract describes marine protected areas (MPAs) as a “very basic need...to ensure the productivity of the marine environment.”¹ Decades later, policy makers have been moving at a glacial pace to meet this “very basic need” despite a steadily accumulating body of scientific knowledge on the use of MPAs as a biodiversity protection tool. MPAs are supported by the S20 leaders of national academies of sciences, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). As with global action on climate change, many nations see the designation of large-scale, no-take MPAs as a threat to their national interests despite all evidence indicating that our continued inaction on ocean protection is the true threat to all nations.

We are quite simply running out of time to change our reactive, exploitation-centric approach to environmental issues, and the consequences will be incredibly dire not only for future generations, but current ones as well. It is unclear how many more extinctions, wildfires, heatwaves, and floods are necessary before humanity realizes that protecting nature is the only way we can protect ourselves, and meet our own basic needs.

When the CAMLR Convention was signed, it was a revolutionary document, and in many ways it still is. Now is the time to see if the Commission has the fortitude to actually implement it, and adopt policies that will truly fulfill the Convention’s clear obligations to maintain healthy Antarctic marine ecosystems. CCAMLR has already designated two MPAs, including the world’s first high seas MPAs

¹ Sidney Holt (Mats Segnestam, ed). The Seas Must Live: Why Coastal and Marine Protected Areas Are Needed. World National Parks Congress, Managing Coastal and Marine Protected Areas Workshop. Bali, Indonesia. 18-20 October 1982. If you would like to read this paper, please email Claire.christian@asoc.org to receive an scanned version of this paper.

in the South Orkney Islands and the Ross Sea, and deserved to be commended for this leadership. Nevertheless, protection must expand if it is to effectively conserve Southern Ocean marine ecosystems long term. Fortunately, despite the coronavirus pandemic and other global challenges, political momentum for taking meaningful action to address the world's environmental issues continues to grow.

Progress on MPAs since CCAMLR-39 and the #CallOnCCAMLR campaign

Since CCAMLR initially agreed to create a representative system of MPAs, there has come to be widespread awareness of the global importance of protecting Antarctica's Southern Ocean at the highest political levels. In December 2020, the *Joint Communication To The European Parliament, The European Council And The Council: A new EU-US agenda for global change* stated, "The EU will also propose to work with the US to broker an agreement on the designation of **Marine Protected Areas in the Southern Ocean**, which would be one of the biggest acts of nature protection in history."² In April, ASOC welcomed announcements from the U.S. and New Zealand that they would join the EU, Australia, Norway, the UK and Uruguay in co-sponsoring two of the MPA proposals under discussion.

In June 2021, a communiqué from the G7 – the 2030 Nature Compact, an outline of key commitments which bring G7 countries together to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, tackle climate change, and address other environmental issues - stated, "We also fully support the commitment of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources ... to develop a representative system of Marine Protected Areas ... in the Convention area in the Southern Ocean based on the best available scientific evidence, and the proposals to establish new MPAs in East Antarctica, the Weddell Sea and the Antarctic Peninsula."³

This was echoed by a statement from the G20 Environment Ministers' meeting that said, "In the context of the Antarctic Treaty System, we fully support, and encourage further progress to implement, the long-standing commitment of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, recognizing Marine Protected Areas, can serve as a powerful tool for protecting sensitive ecosystems representative of the Convention Area, in particular in East Antarctica, the Weddell Sea and in the Antarctic Peninsula."⁴

ASOC has sought to complement these and other statements with our #CallOnCCAMLR campaign, which has attracted significant attention and reached millions of people across the world. To date, petitions to designate the three currently proposed MPAs have garnered 1.5 million signatures combined, demonstrating that Antarctic protection resonates globally.

Thus, ASOC welcomes the MPA updates submitted to CCAMLR-40 and hopes that the CAMLR Commission will go beyond words at CCAMLR-40 to *finally* designate additional marine protected areas - indefinitely. The time for wrangling over legal minutiae or scientific details is over. In this year of anniversaries – the 30th anniversary of the Madrid Protocol, the 40th anniversary of CCAMLR, and the 60th anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty, ASOC believes that CCAMLR should reclaim the leadership the ATS was once known for, and ensure that the next 30, 40, or 60 years of the ATS are as successful as the first.

Conclusion

ASOC recommends that CCAMLR-40:

1. Adopt the East Antarctic MPA (EAMPA) with no limit to its duration, incorporating all three proposed areas (MacRobertson, Drygalski and D'Urville Sea-Mertz).

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/joint-communication-eu-us-agenda_en.pdf

³ <https://www.g7uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/G7-2030-Nature-Compact-PDF-120KB-4-pages.pdf>

⁴ https://www.g20.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2021_07_22_ITG20_ENV_Final.pdf

2. Adopt Phase 1 of the Weddell Sea MPA (WSMPA) and work towards adopting Phase 2 no later than 2023. MPAs resulting from Phase 1 and Phase 2 should not have a limit to their duration.
3. Adopt the Domain 1 MPA (D1MPA), with no limit to its duration, including the extension of no-take zones to all areas previously identified as critical, such as the areas around Elephant Island, to ensure conservation objectives are met.
4. Continue work to establish a representative system of comprehensive, adequate and representative MPAs, with significant no-take areas and no limits to their duration, across all planning domains in the Convention Area including Domain 9, the corridor connecting Sub-Antarctic islands in Domains 4, 5 and 6, and the additional four zones within the original East Antarctic MPA proposal.