

Media Release

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Antarctic Ross Sea protection hangs in the balance at CCAMLR meeting

HOBART, 29 October 2012 – The Antarctic Ocean Alliance (AOA) welcomed the news of a joint US and New Zealand Ross Sea protection proposal as a key foundation for a network of marine protected areas and reserves in the Southern Ocean but warned it will have to be supported by all members of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) to be successful.

“Debate will be robust at the CCAMLR meeting this week among key parties, including fishing nations, and there is no guarantee of success,” said AOA’s director Stephen Campbell. “The devil will be in the detail of what Delegates agree to support for both Ross Sea and East Antarctic marine protection.”

The AOA has called for 3.6 million square kilometres of Ross Sea habitats to be protected based on current scientific research. The US-NZ proposal provides 1.6 million km² of no-take protection areas, which Campbell said is “clearly substantial and could become the largest marine reserve in the world, assuming CCAMLR agrees to it.”

All CCAMLR Members must still agree to the US NZ Ross Sea proposal and therefore success hangs in the balance.

The AOA said environmental organisations are concerned about the concept of ‘light fishing’, reported in today’s media, and where this may occur in the Ross Sea. If specific areas are not protected, including critical Ross Sea habitats, the proposal would fall short of what scientists say is needed to protect key ecosystems in the most pristine ocean left on earth.

Today’s media has reported that the period of agreement for the proposed marine protected area remains open to negotiation, but may be indefinite.

“The AOA urges that marine protected areas should remain in place for generations to come and not be re-opened on a whim by one country,” Campbell said. “It is vital that any proposal provides enduring protection for the most important places.”

Public support for Antarctic marine protection has grown significantly over the last year with more than 1.2 million signing onto calls for large-scale protection. “It is crucially important that CCAMLR reaches agreement on effective proposals for the Ross Sea and East Antarctica. The world is now watching and at the close of the meeting this Thursday, they will be expecting a real result.”

Editor's Note:

The AOA's research has identified over 40% of the Southern Ocean that warrants protection in a network of large-scale marine reserves and MPAs based on conservation and planning analyses, and including additional key environmental habitats.

Antarctic marine ecosystems are under increasing pressure. Growing demand for seafood means greater interest in the Southern Ocean's resources, while climate change is affecting the abundance of important food sources for penguins, whales, seals and birds.

The AOA is made up of 30 international organisations including the Pew Environment Group, WWF, Greenpeace, and International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC) and many others from countries around the world.

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Video and Photos: A video news release and b-roll are available at:

http://www.reru.com.au/Mediafiles/Antarctic_Ocean_Alliance/Videos/.

High resolution photos available for media via the AOA's Blair Palese, details above.

The Antarctic Ocean Alliance is a coalition of high-profile individuals such as actor and UN Biodiversity Ambassador Edward Norton, Oceanographer Dr. Sylvia Earle and entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson as well as 30 leading environmental groups. These include Greenpeace, WWF, Humane Society International, the Pew Environment Group, the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC), the Blue Marine Foundation (UK), Mission Blue (US), Oceans 5 (US), Deep Wave (Germany), The Last Ocean, Forest & Bird (NZ), ECO (NZ), and associate partners the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), the Korean Federation for Environmental Movement (KFEM), Greenovation Hub (China), Oceana, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), and Ocean Planet (Australia).