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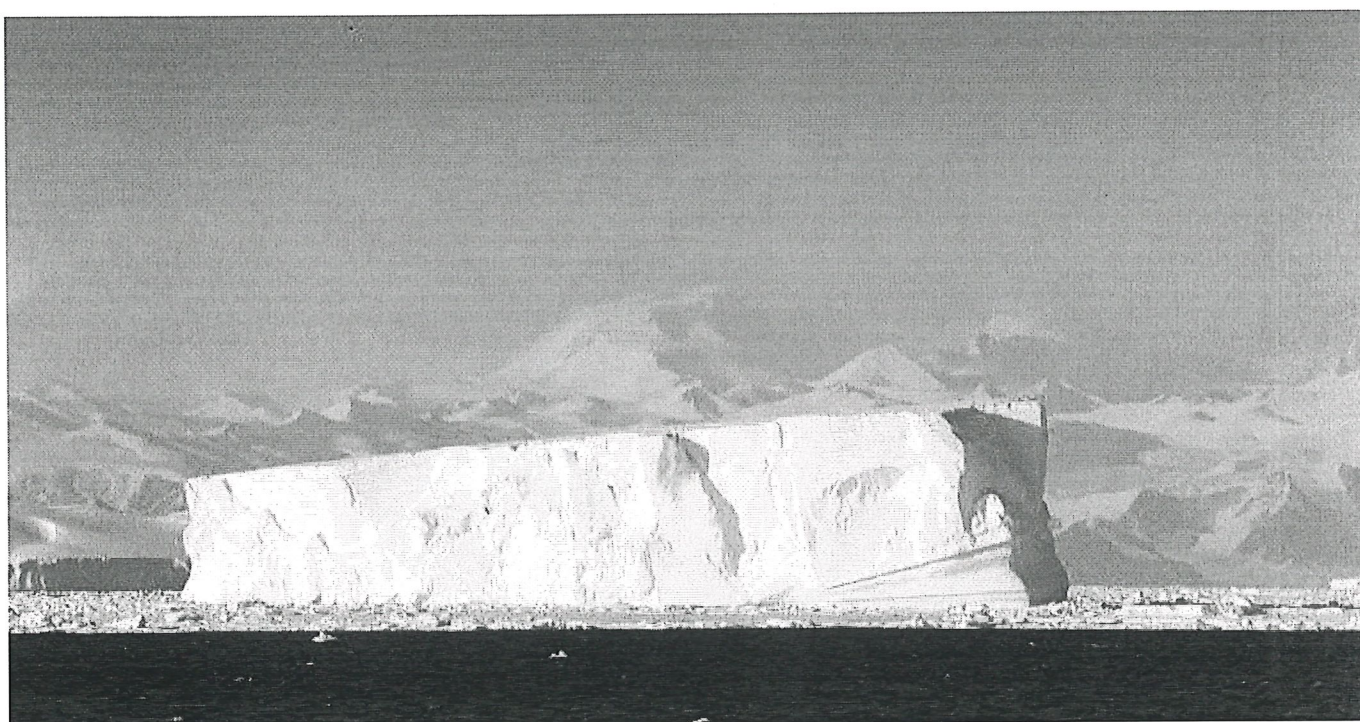
MFAT, n.d.[a]

Ross Sea region Marine Protected Area

The Ross Sea region is one of the most pristine environments in the world. Its unbroken food-chain, still with its full suite of top-level predators, is evidence of this.

The region also includes one of the most thriving areas of the Southern Ocean, the Ross Sea Shelf. At different times of the year this is home to 32% of the world's Adélie penguins, 26% of emperor penguins, 30% of Antarctic petrels, and around half of Ross Sea killer whales. Between 50-72% of South Pacific Weddell seals live there year round.

The Marine Protected Area agreement



In October 2016 the Commission for the Conservation of Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) reached consensus on a New Zealand/United States proposal to establish a large-scale marine protected area in the Ross Sea region of Antarctica. The Agreement will enter into force on 1 December 2017.

Foreign Affairs Minister Murray McCully announced the breakthrough agreement. (external link)

The Ross Sea region Marine Protected Area covers 1.55 million square kilometres, of which 1.12 million square kilometres, or 72%, is fully protected (no fishing is permitted). It is the world's largest Marine Protected Area.

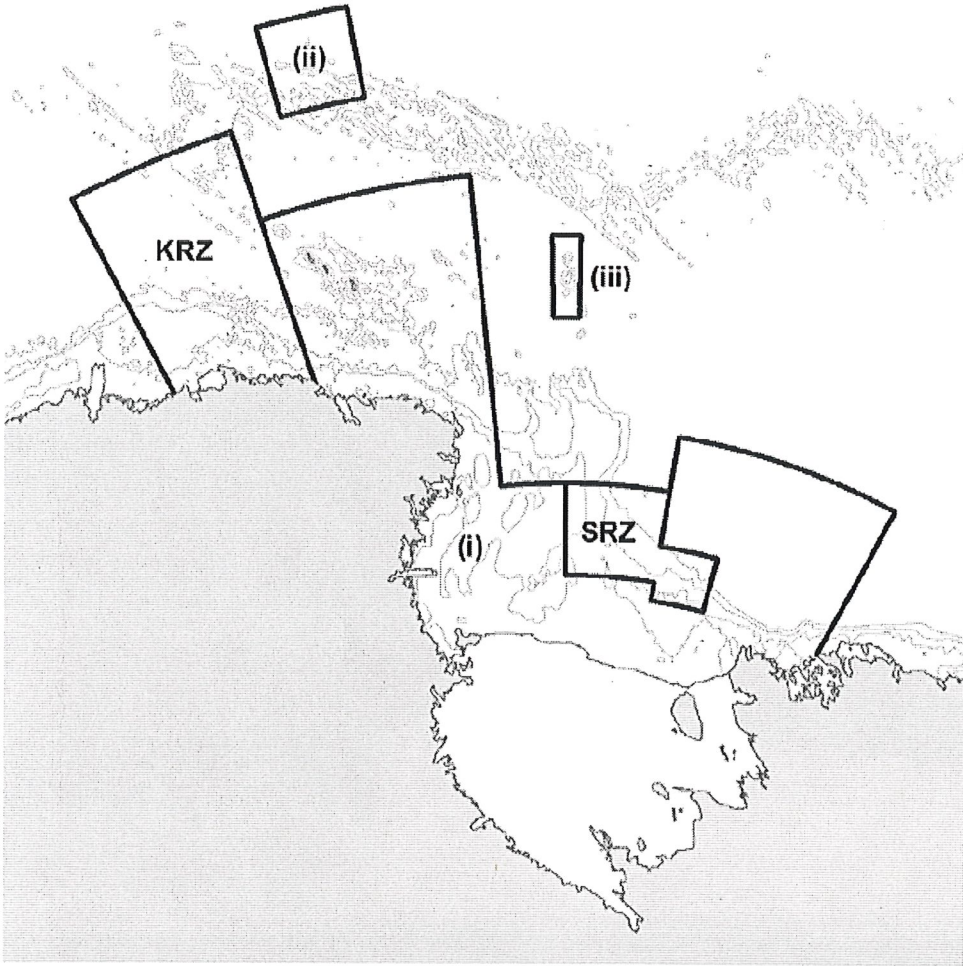
The agreement balances marine protection, sustainable fishing and science interests. These include important habitats and foraging areas for marine mammals, birds, fish, and invertebrates, including iconic species in the region such as Weddell seals, killer whales and Emperor penguins.

New Zealand and the United States first came together to propose the MPA in 2012 and worked together to gain agreement from CCAMLR's 23 other members. CCAMLR only makes decisions by consensus.

This is a significant achievement and represents a major contribution to global marine protection.

The Marine Protected Area features:

- A ‘no take’ General Protection Zone (a fully protected area where no fishing is permitted) that includes:
 - the Ross Sea shelf and slope and the Balleny Islands - see (i) below
 - Representative protection of areas that provide good samples of special habitats - this includes a seamount (underwater mountain) range - see (ii) below
 - Scott Seamount - see (iii) below
- A Special Research Zone which allows for limited research fishing for krill and toothfish – see SRZ below
- A Krill Research Zone which allows for controlled research fishing for krill, in accordance with the objectives of the MPA – see KRZ below.



The duration of the MPA has been set at 35 years for the General Protection Zone, with a consensus decision by the CCAMLR membership required to continue the MPA beyond this period.

A lower period of duration was agreed for the management provisions in the Special Research Zone. These restrictions on fishing will expire after 30 years, at which time the Scientific Committee will consider whether other measures are required to meet agreed science and protection objectives.

The catch limit for Antarctic toothfish in the Special Research Zone is 15% of the total allowable catch for the Ross Sea fishery. The catch limit meets the scientific research and protection objectives for this area.

Should the Special Research Zone expire after 30 years, the catch limit will not exceed 20% of the total allowable catch set for this area.

Conservation and scientific research

The MPA protects rare and vulnerable benthic species including unique sponges that live for up to 500 years, important life cycle areas for Antarctic toothfish, and areas of importance for underpinning and maintaining ecosystem integrity.

The MPA supports scientific research objectives including those relating to assessing the ecosystem effects of fishing distinct from climate change and continued integrity of the toothfish tagging programme which informs the sustainable management of the fishery.

The agreement includes additional provisions to strongly encourage Members to collaborate with other members when undertaking research and monitoring. This includes inviting international cooperation on field research, and data analysis, as well as joint publication

of research findings and papers.

Our strategy for the Ross Sea

A Ross Sea region MPA is part of our 2006 Strategy for the Future Management of the Marine Living Resources and Biodiversity of the Ross Sea. The strategy seeks to strike a balance between marine protection and sustainable harvesting that fits with CCAMLR’s conservation principles. Under the strategy, we’re also:

- increasing our contribution to marine research and ecosystem monitoring
- helping to improve CCAMLR’s fisheries management
- fighting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing
- supporting the role of Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties in providing political direction to the Antarctic Treaty System.

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Related links

[Ross Sea MPA documents](#)

[Commission for the Convention of Antarctic Marine Living Resources \(CCAMLR\) website \(external link\)](#)

[Fighting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing](#)

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