



ASOC Secretariat

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www.asoc.org

Dear _____,

I am writing to you in the hope that you will join the growing number of scientists from all disciplines supporting the creation of a Ross Sea marine reserve.

The Ross Sea has suffered minimal alteration from human activity. It has experienced no mineral extraction, no widespread pollution, no red tides or other toxic algal events, no explosions of gelatinous organisms, no 'mysterious' fish or bird die-offs. It has had neither large anoxic dead zones, nor introductions of alien species. Its fish have not yet been depleted beyond recovery, and it contains a full suite of top predators, including large fish along with marine mammals and seabirds.

The Ross Sea is habitat for an estimated:

- 1,880,000 breeding Adélie Penguins, 38% of the world population
- 104,000 breeding Emperor Penguins, 26% of the world population
- 5,000,000 Antarctic Petrels, >30% of the world population
- 21,000 Antarctic minke whales, ~6% of world population
- 3,500 killer whales, dominated by the unique "Ross Sea killer whale", an unknown proportion of the world population
- 32,000 Weddell Seals, 45% of the Southern Ocean Pacific sector population
- 205,000 Crabeater seals, 12% of the Southern Ocean Pacific sector population and
- 6,000 Leopard seals, 11% of the Southern Ocean Pacific sector population.
- It is also a hotspot for Arnoux's beaked whale, found only in the Southern Ocean.

Equally importantly, the Ross Sea has seen the most intensive complement of marine research in the Southern Ocean, including marine geology, glaciology, hydrography and biology. It contains the longest records in the Antarctic of hydrology, benthic community structure, penguin population ecology, toothfish annual prevalence and marine mammal demography.

For these reasons the Ross Sea is of global significance and in need of full protection.

Worldwide, there is a growing recognition of the value of marine protected areas and marine reserves for both conservation and fisheries management. For the Southern Ocean, the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) and the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties have committed to establishing a representative and comprehensive network of MPAs and reserves. The Ross Sea has been identified by CCAMLR as one of eleven priority areas for protection, with a CCAMLR target date of 2012 for establishing a representative network of marine protected areas in the Southern Ocean.

Decision VII/28 of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) requires all signatory parties to establish a network of well-managed marine sites by 2012, including representative marine and coastal areas where extractive uses are excluded, and other significant human pressures are removed or minimised.

In summary, comprehensive protection for the Ross Sea would deliver a wide range of ecosystem benefits that would promote key values of the Antarctic Treaty, its Environmental Protocol and CCAMLR. A Ross Sea marine reserve would provide a tangible example of how parties to the Antarctic Treaty and CCAMLR are living up to the aspiration of the Antarctic as a natural reserve devoted to peace and science.

The attached scientists' consensus statement is being circulated to the widest group of scientists possible with the intention of releasing it at the annual meeting of CCAMLR in Hobart in October 2010, where delegates will be discussing the next steps towards establishing a representative and comprehensive network across the Southern Ocean. This initiative is being coordinated by the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC) www.asoc.org.

I hope we will have your support for this initiative. Every year without this protection the intrinsic values of the Ross Sea are being eroded. Please reply to Claire Christian (Claire.christian@asoc.org) with your name, affiliation, discipline, degree or other qualification and country to add your name to the signatories. Please also forward this letter to colleagues and ask them to reply to Claire Christian directly. Signatories should have a Masters, PhD or equivalent.

Many thanks for your support.