

NZ Rejects US Proposal To Protect The Ross Sea

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Plans for a marine reserve in Antarctica are in trouble after Cabinet rejected a draft agreement with the United States Government on a joint proposal to create the world's biggest marine reserve in Antarctica's Ross Sea.

It is understood that the US wanted stronger conservation values than what New Zealand was willing to put forward. While the New Zealand Government's official position has not been publicly released, it is widely understood that it will support continued commercial fishing in the Ross Sea.

This decision coincides with the general release of a feature documentary ***The Last Ocean***, directed by Peter Young. The film lifts the lid on New Zealand's involvement in the controversial Ross Sea toothfish fishery, initiated by New Zealand in 1996. Scientists who are expert in the Antarctic region warn that commercial fishing is destroying the natural balance of Antarctica, the most pristine marine ecosystem on Earth.

"This decision is an environmental tragedy with no consideration for future generations." said Peter Young, director of ***The Last Ocean*** and co-founder of the Last Ocean Trust. "Our Government has put short term profits ahead of long term gain."

The Last Ocean Trust is part of the Antarctic Ocean Alliance, an international coalition calling for protection of the entire Ross Sea. "Cabinet's unreasonable rejection of a proposal negotiated between US and NZ officials puts at risk the chances of a Ross Sea marine reserve later this year," said Antarctic Ocean

Alliance New Zealand coordinator, Geoff Keey. “The failure of Cabinet to agree to back the US-NZ proposal is a slap in the face to the US – one of New Zealand’s key Antarctic allies in the region.”

In less than 50 days, the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) – the body that regulates fishing and protection of these waters – will meet in Hobart, Tasmania to debate proposals for Ross Sea protection. The 24 nations (plus the EU) of CCAMLR make decisions by consensus and, the AOA says, separate, competing proposals from NZ and the US risks undermining the chance of a Ross Sea consensus agreement.

Notes:

For more information see:

www.lastocean.org

Peter Young’s blog and response to the NZ Government’s failure to back the proposal

<http://lastocean.wordpress.com>

The **Ross Sea**, often referred to as the “Last Ocean” because it is one of the most intact marine environments left on earth, is a critical habitat for Antarctic toothfish. New Zealand and Korea are the predominant nations currently fishing for toothfish in the Ross Sea.

About the Antarctic Ocean Alliance

The AOA is made of 30 organisations from around the world including WWF, Greenpeace, The Last Ocean, Forest & Bird, ECO, the Humane Society International, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, Greenovation Hub in China and KFEM in Korea. More than 80,000 people around the world have

joined the AOA's "Watch" of CCAMLR to call for large-scale marine protection for Antarctica.

For more information, imagery or interviews please contact:

Evie Ashton

Niki Schuck PR

+64 21 994 074

evie@nikischuckpr.com