

theLASTOCEAN

For Immediate Release

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New Zealand filmmaker appeals to American public to help protect Earth's last untouched ocean

New Zealand filmmaker Peter Young is hoping to send a clear message to North Americans, that eating Chilean Sea Bass could lead to the demise of one of the last great ocean wildernesses on Earth – the Ross Sea, Antarctica. His award winning feature documentary, *The Last Ocean* plays in Washington DC as part of the Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital, screening at the National Museum of Natural History on Saturday 16th March, and will be introduced by the filmmaker.

Six years in the making and completed late last year, the documentary celebrates the Ross Sea, Antarctica, regarded as the most pristine marine ecosystem on Earth, and chronicles the race to protect it before it is destroyed by commercial fishing. Since 1996 an international fishery, initiated and led by New Zealand, has been targeting Antarctic Toothfish in the Ross Sea and intends to reduce the adult population by 50% over 35 years. Sold as Chilean Sea Bass in restaurants around the world, much of the catch ends up in North America.

Young, one of New Zealand's leading wildlife cameramen and a key figure in the campaign to protect the Ross Sea, is calling for American consumers, restaurateurs and supermarkets to refrain from sourcing any Antarctic toothfish. "Most people don't even know where the Ross Sea is, let alone that it is a big source of Chilean Sea Bass," said Young. "But when they discover that, and that the Ross Sea is our last untouched ocean, they are usually surprised and shocked and quite prepared to take a stance."

The Washington DC screening comes at an important stage in the negotiations to protect the Ross Sea. The body that governs the waters around Antarctica, the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), will be meeting in Bremerhaven, Germany in July of this year to discuss a joint proposal submitted by United States and New Zealand for the establishment of a large marine protected area in the Ross Sea. That proposal still allows for commercial fishing and Young says that while it is a good first step, the Ross Sea deserves stronger protection. He hopes his film will convince the public and the decision makers of that.

"When we are down to our last untouched ocean, there is only one right thing to do and that is to protect it," said Young. "We no longer take the buffalo from the great plains of America, nor Kiwi from the forests of New Zealand. For the same reason we should not be taking Antarctic Toothfish from the Ross Sea."

The Ross Sea is the most productive stretch of water in the Southern Ocean. It teems with life, with many species found nowhere else on the planet. US Ecologist Dr. David Ainley, who has been studying wildlife in the Ross Sea for more than 40 years, describes it as a 'living laboratory'. "In the Ross Sea all the top predators are still there and they are abundant, a scenario you don't find anywhere else on the planet. The Ross Sea is a place that can teach us about the workings of all marine ecosystems," said Ainley.

While the land of Antarctica is protected under an international treaty signed more than 50 years ago, the agreement governing the waters allows for 'rational use' of a marine living resource, which is why the fishery is currently permitted.

"The more I learn about the Ross Sea fishery the more I ask, what is rational about it?" said Young. "It's marginal, financially and environmentally. It operates in some of the most extreme maritime conditions on the planet and will destroy the natural balance of this near pristine marine ecosystem. We need to protect these last untouched areas so we can learn from them, and so our children can see how the oceans used to be."

The Last Ocean recently won 'Best Call 2 Action Film' at the Boulder International Film Festival and a Royal Reel award at the Canada International Film Festival. It is supported by NZ on Air, the New Zealand Film Commission, Antarctic Ocean Alliance, Biotherm, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Park Road Post, Global Ocean, and Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition.

Last Ocean Charitable Trust is a member of the Antarctic Ocean Alliance, which is made up of influential environmental organizations including Pew Environmental Group, Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition, WWF and Greenpeace.

***The Last Ocean* at Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital**

Screening at the National Museum of Natural History

Saturday MAR 16 at 12pm

View the promo here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OaqEWbHNQGo&feature=plcp>

Visit the website: www.lastocean.org

The Last Ocean on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/thelastocean>

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