

NEW ZEALAND (/NEWS/NATIONAL) / ENVIRONMENT (/NEWS/ENVIRONMENT)

## Ross Sea marine reserve wins global go-ahead

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The world's largest marine protected area has been given the green light after international agreement at this year's Antarctica conservation meeting.



Frost smoke rises from the sea off the Ross Ice Shelf in Antarctica. Photo: SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY

The proposal to put protection in place for the Ross Sea has been up for discussion since 2012 at the annual Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) in Hobart.

The meeting brings together 25 countries - including New Zealand - with the aim to reach consensus about protected zones in the Ross Sea and in East Antarctica.

3rd There was unanimous agreement at this year's talks to the New Zealand-United Kingdom proposal to establish a protected area in the Ross Sea.



The new protected area will cover roughly 1.55 million square kilometres, of which 1.12 million square kilometres, 72 percent, will be a no fishing zone.



New Zealand has pushed for Ross Sea protection several times. Photo: SCIENCE PHOTO

Foreign Minister Murray McCully said New Zealand had played a leading role in reaching the agreement, "which makes a significant contribution to global marine protection".

A spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade said the agreement balanced 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.

A campaigner for protection of the Ross Sea said it was overwhelming that it will finally receive it after years of talks.

Film maker Peter Young said the Ross Sea was the most pristine stretch of water on the planet.



Foreign Minister Murray McCully Photo: RNZ / Jane Patterson

"I never pictured this day arriving, to tell you the truth, because it was such a huge task and ask, but it gives me great faith in humanity that we have reached this - 25 nations agreeing to protect the Ross sea is just amazing."

Last year, Russia and China dragged the chain on the agreement (<http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/288413/ross-sea-protection-bid-fails>), but did indicate they could support it in the future.

This year's proposal did require some changes to gain unanimous support, but the ministry said the boundaries of the protected area remained unchanged.

For a reserve to be created, all 25 members of CCAMLR have to agree to it.

The agreement will enter into force at the end of next year.

