



(MFAT, n.d.[c])

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.

Why the Ross Sea region is special

The region includes one of the most productive areas of the Southern Ocean, the Ross Sea Shelf. At different times of the year the region is home to:

- more than 30% of the world's Adélie penguins
- around one quarter of all emperor penguins
- around 30% of Antarctic petrels, and
- around half of Ross Sea killer whales.

More than 50% of South Pacific Weddell seals live there year round.

It contains rare and vulnerable benthic species such as unique sponges that live for up to 500 years, breeding grounds and habitats for Antarctic toothfish, and other areas of importance for ecosystem integrity.

[Read our feature story: Antarctic haven](#) [/antarctica-and-the-southern-ocean/antarctic-haven/?l=en_NZ]

Download the poster

- [Ross Sea MPA Poster \[PDF 2.1 MB\]](#) [/assets/Environment/Antarctica-and-the-Southern-Ocean/Ross-Sea/Ross-Sea-MPA-Poster.PDF]

5th

newzealand.govt.nz

We're protecting the
ROSS SEA
REGION

Home to
32%
of the world's
Adelie penguins

26% of emperor penguins

11 bird species
30% of Antarctic petrels

25 CCAMLR members support protecting the Ross Sea

The MPA is **1.55** million km²

6+ species of krill

50% of type-C killer whales

5 seal species

95+ fish species

12 whale species

Colossal squid up to **14M** long

2,000+ invertebrate species

45,000+ Antarctic toothfish tagged and released for research

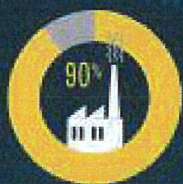
About **30** species of seaweed

30CM sea spiders

Starfish with **50** arms

230+ species of sponge

Our oceans matter



They absorb 90% of excess heat generated by greenhouse gases



They absorb 30% of CO₂ generated by humans

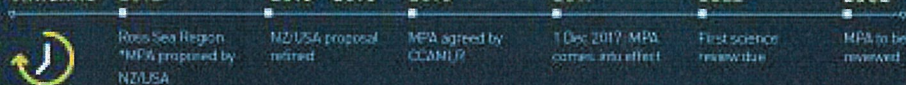


They provide 16% of the animal protein we eat



15% of global catch is taken by illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing

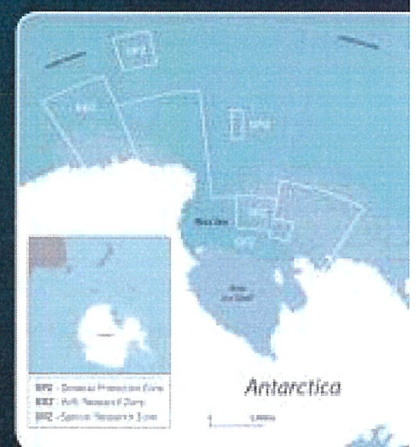
Timeline



*CCAMLR = Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
Find out more at: www.ccamlr.org or www.mfat.govt.nz



Ross Sea *MPA on the map



The Marine Protected Area agreement

P. The Ross Sea region contains the world's largest marine protected area (MPA). It is about 1.5 times the size of the largest national park on land and covers 1.55 million square kilometres, of which 1.12 million square kilometres is fully protected.



Environment, sustainable fishing and science

The MPA balances environmental protection, sustainable fishing and science interests. It protects 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.

Major contribution to global marine protection

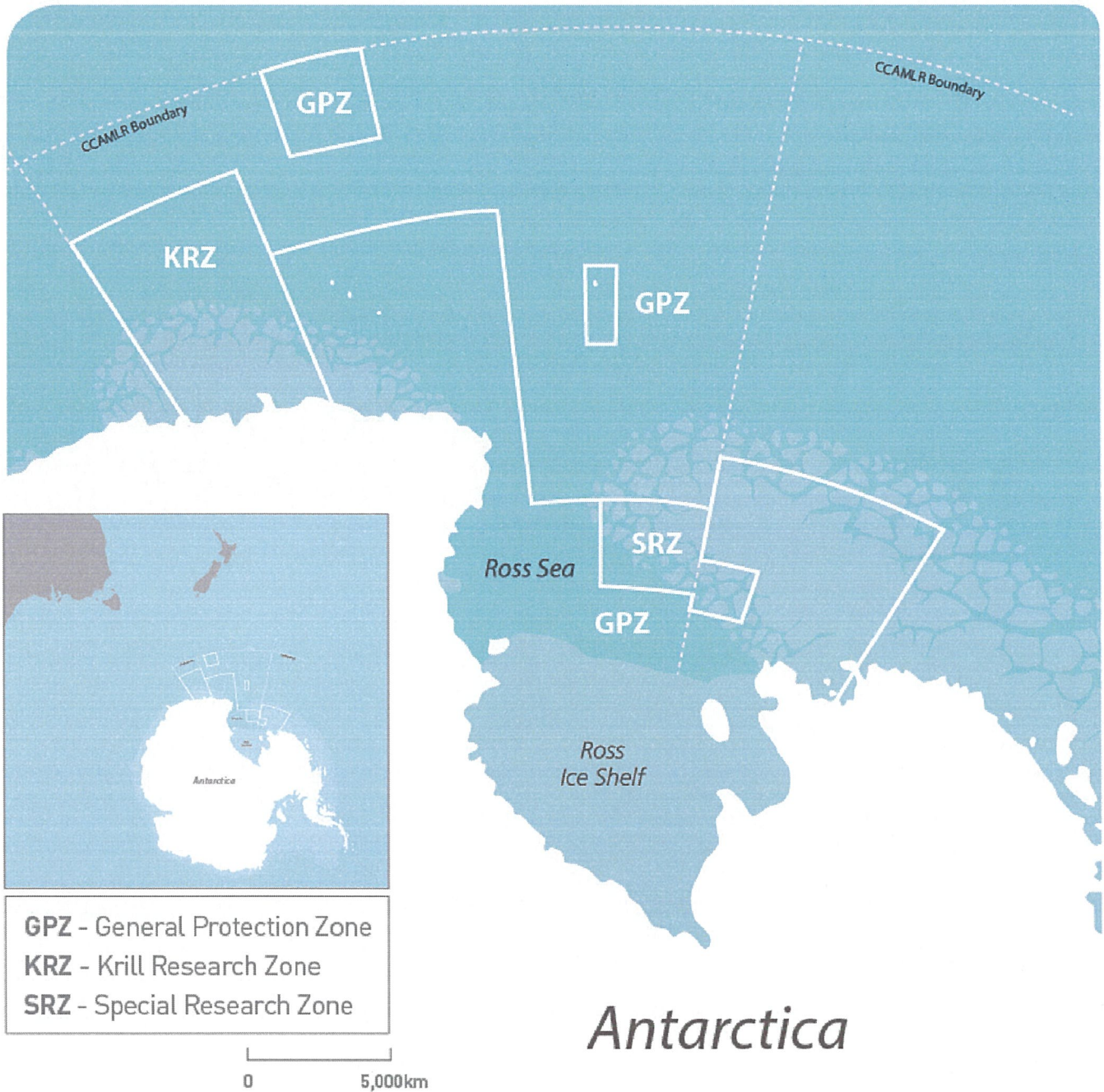
P. The MPA was the result of unanimous support for a joint New Zealand/United States proposal within the 25-member Commission for the Conservation of Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). It was agreed in October 2016 after New Zealand and the United States first put forward their joint proposal in 2012. The Agreement entered into force on 1 December 2017.

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

Features of the Marine Protected Area

The MPA consists of:

- A 'no take' General Protection Zone (a fully protected area where no commercial fishing is permitted) split into three separate areas.
- 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.



Map of the Ross Sea Marine Protected Area

Duration

The duration of the MPA has been set at 35 years for the General Protection Zone. The CCAMLR membership needs to agree by consensus to continue the MPA beyond this time.

A shorter duration was agreed for the Special Research Zone. Restrictions on fishing will expire after 30 years. At this time the Scientific Committee will consider whether other measures are required to meet agreed science and protection objectives.

Conservation and scientific research

Research is an important feature of the MPA. The MPA has a number of specific objectives that will be measured over time to ensure the MPA offers effective protection.

The objectives fall into three broad categories:

- Threat mitigation: the MPA should protect the region's ecosystems from threats.
- Representativeness: the MPA should protect an adequate proportion of the marine environments in the region.
- Scientific reference: the MPA requires areas with little or no fishing so we can understand how intact marine ecosystems work.

Assessment and evaluation

CCAMLR will assess the scientific progress made every five years and will evaluate if the objectives are being met, are relevant, or could be improved, every 10 years.

Collaboration encouraged

The MPA strongly encourages members to collaborate with each other on research and monitoring.

Further information

Media release 26 October 2016: [Agreement to protect Ross Sea reached\(external link\)](#) [https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/agreement-protect-ross-sea-reached]

We use cookies and other tracking technologies to improve your browsing experience on our website, to analyze our website traffic, and to understand where our visitors are coming from. You can find out more information on our [Privacy Page](#) [/en/privacy/].

Accept

New Zealand Foreign Affairs & Trade | Manatū Aorere

195 Lambton Quay, Private Bag 18 901, Wellington 6160, New Zealand

Phone [+64 4 439 8000](tel:+6444398000) [tel:006444398000]

[Find all Ministry contacts](#) [/en/about-us/contact-us/]

[Careers at MFAT](https://vacancies.mfat.govt.nz/) [https://vacancies.mfat.govt.nz/]