



# Importance of Marine Protected Areas

The world is in a climate and biodiversity crisis. Multiple international targets call for a global network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to mitigate ocean threats, conserve biodiversity and manage fisheries. MPAs, especially no-take marine reserves, lead to increases in biomass, density and biodiversity. MPAs can also benefit fisheries by facilitating the recovery of previously overfished species, leading to larger fish and providing spillover effects where fish from within the MPA spill out into adjacent waters open to fishing. By maintaining all trophic levels of the ecosystem and increasing species and genetic diversity, MPAs can also enhance resilience to environmental impacts, such as climate change.



The Western Antarctic Peninsula is Antarctica's most biodiverse region, but it is also the fastest warming region, has the highest level of human visitation, and is subject to the largest commercial fishery in the Southern Ocean. A Western Antarctic Peninsula MPA would provide a powerful tool to mitigate impacts and give the system the best chance of adapting and thriving in the future.

Visit [antarcticanow.org](https://antarcticanow.org) to learn how to protect the peninsula and its wildlife for the future.

# What is a Marine Protected Area (MPA)?

MPAs are an increasingly popular tool for conserving marine biodiversity by restricting human activities to meet specific conservation goals. Similar to National Parks, MPA restrictions and rules vary among countries and ecosystems. In the Southern Ocean, under the supervision of the Commission for Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), MPAs are separated into no take zones where no fishing or natural resource extraction is allowed, and protected areas where human activities are limited to conserve biodiversity. Since 2002, CCAMLR has been working towards developing an ecological representative network of MPAs with the aim of conserving marine biodiversity in the Southern Ocean. These would contribute to sustaining ecosystem structure and function, protect Antarctic biological diversity, and reduce the impacts of climate change. The Southern Ocean currently has two MPAs managed by CCAMLR – the 94,000km<sup>2</sup> South Orkney Islands Southern Shelf MPA adopted in 2009 and the >2 million km<sup>2</sup> Ross Sea region MPA adopted in 2016. Three more MPAs are currently under negotiation in the East Antarctic, Weddell Sea and Western Antarctic Peninsula.

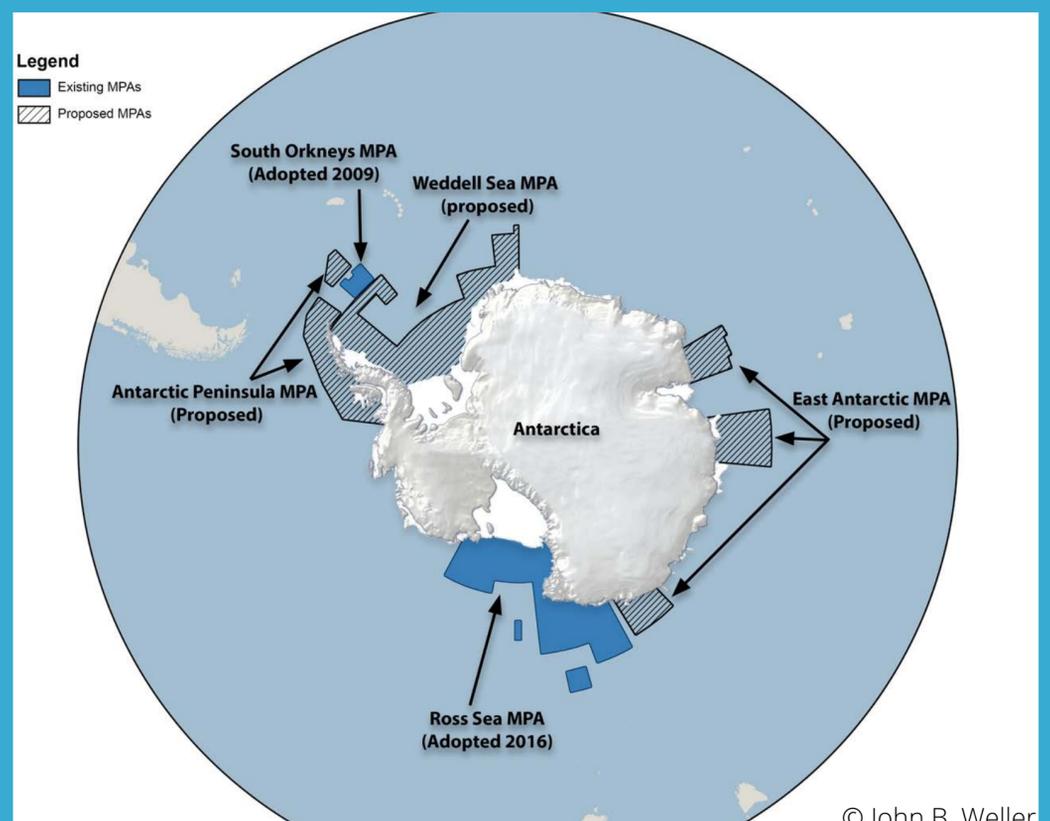
## How are MPAs created?



Antarctic MPAs are created through delegate proposals submitted to CCAMLR. Through decades of scientific research, CCAMLR has identified priority areas for the creation of MPAs. CCAMLR has also developed nine planning domains to guide its work and to provide a platform for national delegations to submit MPA proposals. The most recent MPA proposal, submitted by the delegations of Chile and Argentina, argues for the creation of the Western Antarctic Peninsula and South Scotia Arc MPA (Domain 1 MPA). Scientific research for this proposal took upwards of eight years, and the resulting policy has been in process since 2018. Proposals such as the Domain 1 MPA are reviewed at the CCAMLR meeting in which all 26 member countries must vote in favor of passing the proposal.

## Future of MPAs in Antarctica

National governments and CCAMLR have successfully implemented multiple MPAs in the Southern Ocean, despite the challenging nature of establishing protected areas in international waters. While this achievement should be celebrated, current Antarctic MPAs are not representative of the full range of benthic and pelagic ecoregions. CCAMLR's commitment to a network of ecologically representative MPAs has not yet been implemented. Designating additional protected areas (see three MPA proposals in image to the right) would substantially improve ecological representation across Antarctic waters. We need more MPAs now, with the Western Antarctic Peninsula MPA as a priority to safeguard Southern Ocean biodiversity.



**WE MUST PROTECT THE FUTURE OF ANTARCTICA BY CREATING THE WESTERN ANTARCTIC PENINSULA MARINE PROTECTED AREA. THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW!**