STAND AND DELIVER !!

ECO welcomes all delegates to this 12th session of CCAMLR, wishes you a productive meeting and hopes you will be able to make true progress. To help you in your work, ECO takes this opportunity to remind you of the most important outstanding issues.

* KRILL

Now that pressure on the krill fishery has dropped, it is the perfect time to install additional management measures. These should include measures to protect predator foraging ranges—that thorny issue that has defied resolution so far.

The Precautionary Catch Limits (PCL) that have been set so far should be retained. Even though the revised estimate of total stock for areas 48.1, 48.2 and 48.3 is higher than the previous estimate, ECO believes that an increase in PCL cannot be justified, because of the uncertainty about predator requirements, and the absence of any management scheme to address localised fishing impacts. And don’t forget that the data that these estimates are all based on are now over ten years old!

The issue of mortality of juvenile finfish in the krill fishery has been around now for years. ECO understands that the Ukraine has now produced data saying that there is indeed such a problem. This is another issue where the hiatus in fishing pressure can be used to negotiate a more principled solution than would otherwise be the case.

* NEW AND EXPLORATORY FISHERIES

CCAMLR needs to address what happens after a “new fishery” has its first birthday. Dissostichus eleginoides in 48.4 is a good example: ECO understands that at least one nation, eager to move in, has expressed the view that fishing for D. eleginoides in that subarea should no longer be considered ‘new’ and that full scale commercial catches should be allowed. In ECO’s view, this would be disastrous, because the database on this species in 48.4 is still too poor to allow for proper management of commercial fishing. ECO is pleased to hear that a proposal will be discussed to define and manage an exploratory phase in between new and full scale commercial fisheries, and hopes that this will receive wide support.

ECO RETURNS!

Yes, by popular request, ECO is back! And yes, we’re just as concerned as ever about the state of the Southern Ocean.

ECO had been starting to feel slightly encouraged by some of the developments CCAMLR has made over the past couple of years towards sound management of the ecosystem it is supposed to look after. However, ECO understands that there is now evidence that the stocks of Patagonian toothfish around South Georgia are in serious trouble.

The longlining fishery for Dissostichus eleginoides was really the first fishery CCAMLR “managed” from its inception, and CCAMLR cannot hide behind pre-CCAMLR overfishing as the reason for this failure. Alarm bells rang almost from day one, and there have been constant expressions of concern from the Scientific Committee about the sustainability of this fishery for the past four years. Yet always, the TACs were set above prudent levels by the annual horsetrading sessions, and what may prove to have been the final straw came when new countries leapt in to enjoy the bonanza.

CCAMLR can pride itself on introducing some new mechanisms that have probably staved off more catastrophic collapse, and some of these (such as the five day reporting system and mechanism for closing the fishery when...
the TAC was reached), if combined with more precautionary catch limits, may be used to great effect in future.

But these are small consolations for the imminent destruction of yet another major stock. Will this finally be the spur that pushes CCAMLR onto a new track of ecosystem stewardship? Or are we destined to see the same patterns repeated over and over until all the stocks have been comprehensively destroyed? All ECO can do is express its outrage. It is up you, dear delegate, to choose the future of CCAMLR.

LAMENT FOR A TOOTHFISH

_Dissostichus, Dissostichus,_
_O where, O where are you?_
_You’re shuffling off this mortal coil_
_Your swimming days are through_
_Your crime was to be tasty to the markets and the nets_
_Dissostichus, Dissostichus, any last requests?_

On Friday 8 October, balloon-borne and ground based ozone sensors at South Pole station measured an all-time world record low ozone column of 88 Dobson units, less than a third of what normally existed over Antarctica at this time of year before the advent of the ozone hole. The balloon experiment showed that all the ozone between 13.5 and 19 km had been destroyed.

Ozone levels in New Zealand continue to decline at a steady state of 6% per decade, and the record losses over the Antarctic will further erode ozone levels over the whole of the Southern Hemisphere. The reasons suggested for the record low values over Antarctica this year are the remaining presence of volcanic material from the Mt Pinatubo eruption in 1991, and the fact that there is, once again, more chlorine in the stratosphere this year than last.

Of course, to make ecological sense, this concept would have to be applied to all areas where there has been no fishing for some time, even if the past fishing was never labelled “new” because it predates that concept.

* FISH

ECO hopes that it goes without saying that in the absence of new scientific data the fisheries in area 48.1 and 48.2 should remain closed. The good old British phrase “No data, no fish” is as appropriate as ever.

Likewise, any area without new data should remain closed, or have its TAC reduced: it is undesirable to maintain a TAC at a constant level in the absence of current scientific biological data on which to base a realistic assessment. This leads us to another interesting subject which ECO understands to be on the agenda this year.

* PRINCIPLES FOR SETTING TACS UNDER CONDITIONS OF SCIENTIFIC UNCERTAINTY

ECO is extremely surprised that this needs to be included as a specific discussion item for CCAMLR.

At last year’s CCAMLR meeting some members, including Australia, Sweden and New Zealand, insisted that the TAC for lanternfish in area 48 should not be maintained when catches dropped and no new biological information was available. This application of the precautionary approach seemed eminently reasonable to ECO, but it was rejected by certain fishing states, and sparked the debate that led to the inclusion of this specific agenda item.

ECO can only ask those fishing states: When will you stop trying to place the burden of proof on the environment? Where have you been lately, while the precaution-

THE EFFECTS OF THE OZONE LAYER DEPLETION ON VARIOUS ORGANISMS IN ANTARCTICA.
ary principle has been accepted and reflected in several international treaties dealing with environmental concerns? When will you join the rest of the world which has moved towards accepting the precautionary approach?

* INCIDENTAL MORTALITY*

The scale of mortality of seabirds from longlining activities in the CCAMLR area remains a serious concern. ECO understands, for example, that the number of instances of longlining fishing gear (especially hooks) recorded in association with breeding albatrosses at Bird Island, South Georgia, was the highest ever recorded in one season. Unless there are clear signs that Conservation measures aimed at addressing bird mortality from longlining are actually achieving the desired result (and ECO understands that New Zealand has some new data about prevention of incidental mortality in longline fisheries) some serious thinking is required on the acceptability of Southern Ocean longline fisheries in their current form.

We are also concerned about the possible use of net-monitoring cables on vessels used by Ukraine in the CCAMLR area. Ukraine is not a full member of CCAMLR, and hence not bound by the Conservation Measures. Nonetheless, ECO urges Ukraine to apply Conservation Measure 30/D.

ECO notes that surveys at Bird Island reported a ten-fold increase in the number of entangled fur seals in the 1992 winter, and a 75% increase (combined with a higher incidence of entangled females) during the 1992/93 summer. In 50% of the cases, the entangling was caused by packaging bands; in 25% of cases by fishing net. As strapless bait boxes are now available, ECO sees no reasons why packing bands cannot be banned from the CCAMLR area.

* OBSERVATION AND INSPECTION*

ECO welcomes the UK and Chilean initiative to put observation into practice, and calls on other parties to follow suit, so that we have observers in all fisheries. We note that the Scientific Committee has placed a high priority on observation as a tool that will improve the advice it gives to the Commission, but that so far Commission Members have largely failed to rise to the challenge.

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**OH NON NON, PAS MOI!!**

What is so special about subarea 58.4.1, the area around Kerguelen? Well, for one, it seems to be an area where in the last three years, the Scientific Committee's advice on Fish stocks has failed to be translated into Conservation Measures because of French opposition.

For example:

In 1990, the Scientific Committee recommended that there should be no directed catch for Champsocophalus gunnari in area 58.5.1. It concluded that for Dissostichus eleginoides it could give no additional advice over that given in the previous year, when a TAC of 1100 tons had been recommended. The Commission endorsed the advice of the Scientific Committee. However, the French delegation declared that this advice may not be regarded as pertinent to waters adjacent to Kerguelen. As a result, in 1990/91 a total of 12,660 tonnes of C. gunnari was caught in 58.5.1 as well as a total of 1,848 tonnes of D. eleginoides.

In 1991 the Commission endorsed Scientific Committee advice for area 58.5.1 that catches of D. eleginoides should not exceed 1,100 tonnes in either the western or northern fishing grounds. However, once again no Conservation Measure was agreed by the Commission. A total of 7,492 tonnes was caught in 1991/92, mostly in the northern grounds—more than three times the amount mentioned in the Scientific Committee’s advice...

In 1992 the Commission again endorsed the advice of the Scientific Committee concerning catches in area 58.5.1 and, again, was not able to come up with a Conservation Measure. ECO wonders what the actual catches were in 1992/93.

So, again, what is so special about area 58.4.1? International lawyers will no doubt point out that it has a special status in CCAMLR, because of the statement of the Chairman of the Conference on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources in 1980. This allows France to exclude the waters around Kerguelen from any rules that the Commission may want to put in place there. OK, but what is so special ecologically about this area that would warrant such ignoring of advice from the Scientific Committee or Commission? Are French fish somehow exempt from biological rules? Do they magically regenerate themselves after being caught? ECO does not believe so. While the French desire to exempt themselves from CCAMLR control in this area may be legally acceptable, it is both ecologically and morally indefensible.
ECO QUIZ - KNOW YOURSELF

WHAT WOULD YOUR RESPONSE BE IN THIS SITUATION?

a) You release the snakes back in their natural habitat and close the pit.

b) You cover the pit with a lid or wire mesh.

c) You decide that the situation needs further study and discussion.

d) You say, "there is no proof the youngster is in danger," and continue business as usual.

YOUR SCORE:

a) 10 points. Congratulations. You practise Precaution and have an "Ecosystem Approach". You are a true citizen of the 1990s, and could be trusted with any ecosystem.

b) 7 points. Good. You know about "Precaution", but you would do well to rid yourself of the lingering "one species" hangup from the dark ages.

c) 3 points. You have probably attended too many CCAMLR meetings.

d) 0 points. Think!! Do you really have another planet to move to when you have destroyed this one? Are you by any chance a fishing nation?

UN Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Species

In July 1993, the UN hosted an inter-governmental Conference on Highly migratory and Straddling Fish Stocks. Several CCAMLR member countries participated in this conference, the focus of which was the establishment of a management and conservation plan for straddling and highly-migratory species, which are especially vulnerable to over-exploitation.

Several principles on which to base a management plan were discussed at this Conference. There was extensive debate on the precautionary principle and its application to fisheries management. Reference was made to CCAMLR as an important international convention that includes elements of a precautionary approach.

ECO encourages all delegates to start making the links between CCAMLR and other international fisheries discussions and treaties. Can you honestly say that CCAMLR has achieved a precautionary approach? ECO thinks not. Are there lessons to be learned from the CCAMLR experience that will help governments to take a precautionary approach elsewhere in international fisheries? ECO certainly hopes so, and we urge delegates to take on this challenge with renewed vigour.