ECO has noticed that CCAMLR has changed quite a lot over the past few years. For a conservation organization, it has not actually finalized many conservation actions recently. If this keeps up, the Convention text and CCAMLR practice will continue to diverge. We think some Members must be reading a redacted and revised version of the Convention text. Something that looks a little like this [unchanged text is represented by ellipses]:

Constitution on the Conservation Rational Use of Antarctic Marine Living Resources

Preamble: The Contracting Parties...have agreed as follows:

Article I. . . .

2. Antarctic marine living resources means—the populations of fin fish, molluscs, crustaceans and all other species of living organisms, including birds, only the species anyone can currently harvest or may want to harvest some day, found south of the Antarctic Convergence.

3. The Antarctic marine ecosystem means the complex of relationships of Antarctic marine living resources with each other and with their physical environment is interesting, but only if it has commercial value....

Article II

1. The objective of this Convention is the conservation rational use of Antarctic marine living resources.

2. For the purposes of this Convention, the term ‘conservation’ ‘rational use’ may includes rational-use conservation (if convenient).

3. Any harvesting and associated activities in the area to which this Convention applies shall be conducted in accordance with the provisions of this Convention whenever Contracting Parties want and in accordance with the following principles of conservation rational use:

(a) [delete original text and insert] fishing is an unlimited right;
(b) [delete original text and insert] scientific research designed to increase fishing opportunities is an unlimited right; and
(c) prevention of [delete original text and insert] fishing or scientific research, regardless of the justification, is unacceptable.

Article IX—[delete entire section, especially 2(g)]

EAST ANTARCTICA: WILD AND WONDERFUL

ECO was pleased to read the latest results on East Antarctica’s Adelie penguins from scientists at the Australian Antarctic Division this week. It shows that Adelie populations in East Antarctica have almost doubled since 1970, which is great news since Adelies in the West Antarctic Peninsula are declining. Of course we also must acknowledge that emperor penguins in the same region are declining. All the same, ECO is tremendously glad that there are some places left on the planet where wildlife can thrive. The global picture is not so good (http://wwf.to/1jJAw8I).

The science behind the changing populations of penguins in East Antarctica and Antarctica as a whole is complex but fascinating. It’s very useful that there are areas in East Antarctica that can help us to understand what changes in Antarctica are related to climate change, and which are influenced by tourism and fishing. Wouldn’t it be nice if CCAMLR had a way to make sure these interesting habitats were protected forever, for wildlife and for scientific study? Oh that’s right, they do – they’re called MPAs. Don’t disappoint the Adelies – designate East Antarctica MPAs!

THE ROMANCE OF MPAs

ECO recalls that a few years ago a CCAMLR delegate compared the MPA process to a romantic relationship. So ECO was thinking, what would a courtship look like if it were conducted like CCAMLR’s MPA discussions? Read on to find out.

Peter: Natasha, will you marry me?
Natasha: Distinguished Peter, I thank you for this proposal. I am willing to participate in this talk constructively...
Peter: Okay, well...
Natasha: Peter, I know our relationship is in good shape. The International Marriage Union already recognized us as a Category IV couple... Do you think it is necessary to get married?
Peter: Natasha, do you love me or not?!

Natasha: Of course I love you. But marriage is a legal issue and the legal definition of our home countries are different. I worry about the legal basis for that.

Peter: I can check the agreement between our home countries, I am sure the legal basis is fine...
Natasha: Not only legal issues, from the perspective of science, we need to get our health condition checked.

Peter: Sure. So...

Natasha: Peter, have you considered how we will monitor the health of our marriage? Marriage is a BIG thing!

Peter: I think it is up to us both to work it out...

Natasha: Right, so why don’t we make a checklist and go through each item one by one?

Peter: I think that’s helpful. What would be in that list?

Natasha: You know, something about how frequently I can date other guys, and the duration of this marriage, ten or twenty years maybe?

Peter: ...

ALL HANDS ON DECK!

ECO was thrilled to hear that since CCAMLR last met a new Code for shipping in polar waters has been will become effective from January 2017. ECO was going to unreservedly welcome the Code, pleased that we could now be secure in the knowledge that ships would meet the highest standards of international shipping while operating in these remote and vulnerable parts of the world. But it has come to ECO’s attention that it is not all plain sailing.

In the last decade, ECO has sadly observed that it is incidents involving fishing vessels and yachts that have resulted in the most serious incidents in polar waters. ECO was therefore shocked and disappointed to learn that the safety aspects of the Polar Code will not apply to fishing vessels. “Why not?” ECO asks. Fishing vessels (along with private yachts) account for around half of the incidents in Antarctic waters in recent years, Regrettably ECO can only conclude that the newly adopted Polar Code does not currently meet the needs of vessels operating in the Southern Ocean. But there is hope! ECO has heard that these so-called non-SOLAS vessels (i.e. vessels outside of the scope of the International Convention on the Safety of Life at Sea), could be considered by the IMO during a “phase 2” of work on the Polar Code and it seems that there could be other possible routes to adopt mandatory measures for fishing vessels operating in polar waters. ECO suspects that it will however require “all hands on deck” approach before the needs of vessels operating the Southern Ocean are fully addressed. Time for CCAMLR to step up!