As the next meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) approaches, some Members have suggested that Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Marine Reserves (MRs) in the region should be designated with an expiry date. The Antarctic Ocean Alliance (AOA) strongly disagrees.

**In Brief:** All widely accepted definitions of international MPAs and MRs do not provide for their expiration. However, many MPAs contain review clauses that allow for periodic review and adjustments to their management and research plans. Adjustments may be made as long as they ensure that protected areas maintain the values for which the protected area was designated. The Antarctic Ocean Alliance submits that a clause that automatically ends the designation of a protected area at a certain date is not in line with the central concept of MPAs, as it would not meet long-term conservation objectives and could not be considered an MPA. The AOA is calling on CCAMLR to reject clauses with an end date (sunset clause) and agree on standard review clauses that address management and research plans for designated Antarctic MPAs.

All widely accepted definitions or concepts of MPAs and MRs under international agreements do not provide for their expiration. This is because it is not possible at the time of creation to determine when the MPA will no longer be needed. Instead, management and research arrangements are set up to be flexible through review clauses, which allow MPAs to achieve long-term protection objectives while allowing management measures related to activities permitted in the MPAs to be reviewed after reasonable time periods and adjusted if necessary. The sunset clause concept, which is sometimes used in fishing closures, is entirely unprecedented in protected area management, and is not consistent with MPA definitions accepted by a number of international bodies including the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR).

**COMMON DEFINITIONS OF MPAs OR PROTECTED AREAS:**

**Convention on Biological Diversity**

Article 2 of the Convention on Biological Diversity defines a “protected area” to be “a geographically defined area which is designated or regulated and managed to achieve specific conservation objectives”. This simple definition is explicit in what it says and what it does not say. A protected area explicitly addresses the conservation of biodiversity objectives only. While other objectives may be complementary to conservation objectives, i.e. fisheries objectives, they are not why a protected area is designated. Further, conservation objectives are long term by their nature.

**International Union for the Conservation of Nature**

The definition of a protected area provided by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is “a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values”.

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This definition has been adopted by the United Nations Environment Programme. The IUCN definition references one objective, “the long-term conservation of nature...”, and clearly offers a guide to the temporal aspect of protection by the inclusion of ‘long-term’ as part of that objective. In addition the IUCN has taken the step of explaining what specific words and phrases included in the definition mean in their Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories: “Protected areas should be managed in perpetuity and not as a short-term or temporary management strategy. Temporary measures, such as short-term, grant-funded agricultural set-asides, rotations in commercial forest management or temporary fishing protection zones are not protected areas as recognised by the IUCN.”

The Oslo Paris Agreement (OSPAR)

OSPAR has designated a number of high-seas MPAs in the North Atlantic, all of which are effectively designated in perpetuity.

ACCUMULATION OF BENEFITS OVER TIME:

The benefits of MPAs and marine reserves accrue over time. The investment made in establishing a MPA or marine reserve and the resultant benefits may be lost very quickly once protection is removed. In areas which are recovering from past exploitation it may take species or habitats decades, or sometimes even centuries, to fully recover. Permanent protection enables scientists to establish long-term research programmes and produce long-term data sets which are especially important when investigating climate change and monitoring ecological systems and processes which may follow patterns that occur over very long time frames.


About the Antarctic Ocean Alliance

The Antarctic Ocean Alliance is a coalition of more than 30 leading environmental organisations and high-profile individuals working together to achieve large-scale protection for key Antarctic ocean ecosystems. Alliance members include the Pew Environment Group, Greenpeace, WWF, the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC), Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC), Humane Society International, Mission Blue (US), International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Oceans 5 (US), Deep Wave (Germany), The Last Ocean, Greenovation Hub (China), the Korean Federation for Environmental Movement (KFEM), Forest & Bird (NZ), ECO (NZ) and associate partners the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Oceana, TerraMar Project, the International Polar Foundation (UK), Plant a Fish, the International Programme on the State of the Oceans (IPSO), the Ocean Project, Bloom Association (France), OceanCare (Switzerland), Eco-Sys Action, Ocean Planet (Australia) and Corail Vivant (New Caledonia). AOA Ambassadors include actors Leonardo DiCaprio, Edward Norton, Oceanographer Dr. Sylvia Earle, entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson, Chinese entrepreneur and explorer Wang Jing and Korean actor Yoo Ji-Tae.