

Australia declares world's largest marine reserves

November 15 2012



A Minke whale surfaces in the ocean off the coast near Sydney in 2010. Australia Friday officially declared the creation of the world's largest network of marine reserves, protecting more than 2.3 million square kilometres (0.89 million square miles) of ocean environment.

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The announcement, after years of planning and consultation, will expand the protection of creatures such as the [blue whale](#), [green turtle](#), critically endangered populations of grey nurse sharks, and dugongs.

"Australia is a world leader when it comes to protecting our oceans, and so we should be, we've got responsibility for more of the ocean than almost any other country on Earth," Environment Minister Tony Burke said.

"Of the 80,000 submissions received, the vast majority of submissions were supportive of the government's plan to create the world's largest network of marine parks.

"The declaration of these new [marine reserves](#) delivers on an election commitment and represents a major achievement for the long term conservation and sustainable use of Australia's oceans."

The declaration came despite opposition from fishermen who claimed [coastal communities](#) would be ruined, thousands of jobs lost and the Aus\$2 billion (US\$2 billion) aquaculture industry seriously impacted.

Burke said he understood his decision would have an impact and said businesses affected by the changes would be able to access Aus\$100 million in assistance.

"Even though the new marine reserves have been designed in a way to minimise impacts on industry and recreational users, the government recognises that there will be impacts on some fishers and we will support those impacted," he said.

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