

# Vast Antarctic sanctuary plans fail

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File picture shows a runner passing a penguin during a marathon in the Antarctic where plans to create two vast ocean sanctuaries failed Friday for a third time with Russia and China blocking the bids

Plans to create two vast ocean sanctuaries in Antarctica to protect the pristine wilderness failed Friday for a third time with Russia and China blocking the bids, delegates at multi-nation talks said.

The proposals for two huge Marine Protected Areas were on the table at

the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) meeting in Hobart, which brought together 24 countries and the European Union.

But the 10-day talks ended in disappointment with the nations unable to agree to a US-New Zealand proposal for a protected zone in the Ross Sea and another by Australia, France and the European Union for a sanctuary off East Antarctica.

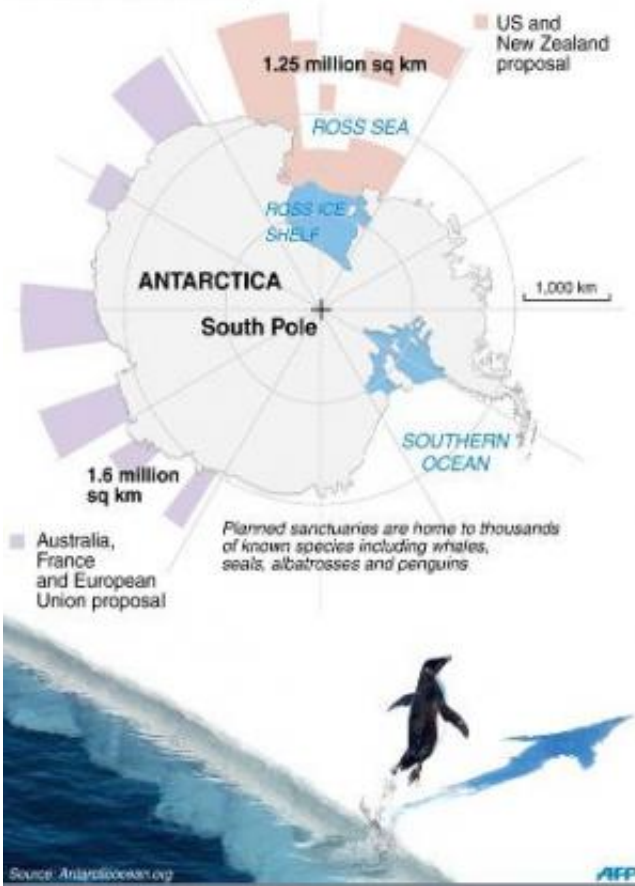
"The international community came together in Hobart to protect key parts of the Antarctic Ocean—one of the last pristine environments in the world—yet Russia chose to stand in the way," said Joshua Reichert, executive vice president of US-based Pew Charitable Trusts, which had a delegate inside the talks.

Environmentalists said an [ocean](#) wilderness that is home to 16,000 known species, including whales, seals, albatrosses, penguins and unique species of fish, was at stake.

CCAMLR—a treaty tasked with overseeing conservation and sustainable exploitation of the Antarctic Ocean, also known as the Southern Ocean—has not yet made any official comment but the head of the Swedish delegation Bo Fernholm said the outcome was disappointing.

## Proposed Antarctic sanctuaries

Plans to create two vast ocean sanctuaries to protect the pristine wilderness failed on Friday



Graphic showing two proposed ocean sanctuaries off Antarctica to protect the pristine wilderness which failed Friday for a third time with Russia and China blocking the bids, delegates at multi-nation talks said

"There was sadness," he told AFP. "We were quite unhappy with the fact that it didn't go ahead, that they couldn't get it through now was a disappointment."

The sanctuaries required the support of all 25 members of CCAMLR to be passed and despite the scale of the New Zealand-US proposal being reduced, Russia was not won over by either proposal.

Another of the official delegations told AFP that China also opposed the East Antarctica plan, but not the Ross Sea one.

"The talks have failed. Russia and China wanted more details, more time. It's very disappointing," said the delegate, who did not want to be named as he was forbidden from talking until the meeting officially closes later Friday.

This was the third attempt since 2012 by CCAMLR to protect large areas in the Southern Ocean and Fernholm said while "substantial discussions" took place, Russia had reservations, believed to be related to the limits on fishing.

"I think there are some major problems remaining on some of the major things like how long does a marine protected area need to stay in force, and there were also objections about the size of these [marine protected areas](#)," he added.

The US-New Zealand bid for a sanctuary in the Ross Sea, the deep bay on Antarctica's Pacific side, had been considered the best hope after its size was reduced, with its no-fish zone to be 1.25 million square kilometres (482,000 square miles).

The second proposal called for a 1.6 million square kilometre protected zone off East Antarctica, on the frozen continent's Indian Ocean side.

Protecting those areas could have created the largest marine protection areas in the world.

Andrea Kavanagh, director of The Pew Charitable Trusts' Southern Ocean sanctuaries project, said protecting the teeming [marine life](#) of the Antarctic waters had far-reaching consequences for the world's oceans.

"Three-quarters of all marine life is maintained by a Southern Ocean current that pulls nutrient-rich waters from the deep ocean to the surface and then around the world," she said.

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