Government Presses on with Minerals, Oil and Gas Agenda

by Cath Wallace

The government has announced a massive increase in areas to be opened to oil and gas exploration with 25 new regions opened up for 40,000 square kilometres of seabed and land, just this year, with more next year. This is consistent with the government’s push for short term economic benefits at the expense of the climate and the environment, and the longer term well being of New Zealand. The “resource curse” is a well known syndrome where exploitation of extractive resources disadvantages other economic activities so that the regions or countries involved end up with depressed economic prospects.

The government announced the changes on 10 February, though details of the exact location are the subject of consultation by the government with local government and iwi. There is no apparent element of consultation with those with environmental expertise.

Environmental considerations will be dealt with under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) for areas out to 12 nautical miles offshore. Beyond 12nnm the EEZ and Continental Shelf (Environmental Effects) Act will apply once passed and regulations are developed under it.

The government announcement proposes that:

“The proposed blocks for 2012 cover 40,285 km² of offshore seabed and 5,704 km² of land in Waikato,
ECOlink March 2012

exports to penalise us for greenhouse gas emissions.


Heads up: Crown Minerals Act Review

Policy development on the Crown Minerals Act Review seems, like much mining, to have gone underground, away from the sight of potentially affected communities and environmental interests. An announcement is expected soon. Back in 2010 Gerry Brownlee, then Minister of Energy and Resources, launched a consultation on a review of the Crown Minerals Act 1991 which covers both minerals and petroleum extraction but not environmental effects.

Environmental impacts are supposed to be dealt with under the Resource Management Act 1991 out to 12 nautical miles. Minerals activities are covered by the Continental Shelf Act beyond this. Environmental matters will eventually be considered under the Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf Bill (EEZ&CS), once it is passed.

Here we canvass some of the things to watch out for in the Review of the Crown Minerals Act when it does appear. We have based this on the submissions and ministerial statements on that 2010 Review.

The Minister has stressed the wish of the government to promote economic growth and investment attractiveness to the minerals industry, and the desire to improve access to minerals for the industry, to make the system more efficient and to give the Minister more power.

The 2010 consultation paper sought to remove much of what is now in the Act to regulations or to the Crown Minerals Programmes. This would centralise power to the Minister – a common theme with “reforms” suggested by Hon Gerry Brownlee. Parliament would not have to be consulted on any changes to regulations.

Both industry and conservation groups were alarmed at the prospect of the removal of so much from statute law. The industry was mostly concerned with the destabilisation of their “property rights” and uncertainties of investment. Conservation groups too thought that we needed policy stability and clarity rather than Ministerial capriciousness.

Though strong on pressing the case for their own “property” rights, mining industry group Strataerr and the Coal Association wanted the removal of the rights of land owners and occupiers to veto minerals activity on their land. Industry favours the regime for Petroleum where owners and occupiers can be forced by compulsory arbitration to allow access to their land. In the case of mining however, such access could well mean the land was dug up and spat out again as tailings, a far greater localised impact than oil production.

Below we canvass other things that the industry wanted that conservation groups and land owners should watch out for when the Review is published. To our knowledge no environmental interests have been included in this policy making.

Under the Crown Minerals Act, applicants may apply for: fossicking permits, prospecting, exploration and mining permits, in increasing order of impact, though fossicking is not something industry is likely to want. Details of what can be done in each are on page 4.

Possible changes that may emerge include these: Newmont pressed for an “infrastructure permit” to cover activities related to exploration and mining. Significantly, changes put by the mining industry in a number of Regional Policy Statements and district plans seek to privilege “infrastructure” and the government too has used this term. Could these two things be...

Tui Mine, Te Aroha, Coromandel Photo: Barry Weeber

ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION ORGANISATIONS OF NEW ZEALAND
ECO • PO Box 11057 • Wellington

Individuals - support ECO by:

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- $120 p.a. (GST incl.)
- $500 p.a. (GST incl.)
- $25 p.a. (GST incl.)
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ECO Annual Street Appeal 2012

Calling all Wellington Friends of ECO! The date for our Annual Street Appeal will be Thursday 22nd March 2012.

We will be out collecting from 8am until 5.30pm, mostly in the Wellington Central Business District, although if we can get enough volunteers for collecting we’ll work the suburbs too.

If you have an hour or two to spare on Thursday 22nd March, and really want to contribute to ECO, please volunteer to be a collector.

Being a street collector gets you outdoors and is an opportunity to meet many other people. Every little helps, and the more collectors there are, the more money we raise.

Please contact us on (04) 385 7545, or (04) 476 9809 or email: eco@eco.org.nz, to register.
is able to exclude in the agreement. To change our investment laws we would have to consult with foreign companies which might be affected.

Foreign investors could sue the government for breaching their rights under the TPPA. For example they could sue if we change our laws in ways that affect their expected profits or share value. The case would be heard in secret in an international tribunal, not in our domestic courts.

In Australia, the Labour Party is trying to get commitments for the TPPA not to undermine Australia’s pharmaceutical scheme (which regulates the price of medicines) and other areas such as labour rights, environmental regulations and foreign investment rules.

What rights would international companies have in New Zealand?

One powerful company could put pressure on the government to change our laws, environmental standards or policies or to provide RMA or marine consents.

Concessions: Kelsey and others have documented cases of international examples where governments have paid penalties when being sued rather than trying to defend themselves through a long and expensive legal process.

TPPA Effects for Māori

Any diminishment of sovereignty has implications for the Treaty of Waitangi. An example is limitations that might be placed on what the government can negotiate in Treaty settlements. An example is mining. Foreign companies are getting permits for exploration and mining on land subject to claims that aren’t yet settled. Often with Māori land, the hapū aren’t being fully consulted before licences are issued. If a future government decides that further regulation is needed on mining, their hands might be tied by the priority rights of mining companies.

Another example from Chile: the Mapuche have faced expansion of pine forestry, hydro dams, fishing and salmon farms along the rivers and foreshores, without proper consultation or participation in benefits. Their protests have been criminalised by the Chilean state and hundreds of Mapuche activists have been imprisoned.

Decisions are still to be made to regulate water allocation in Aoteaoro NZ, so we need to allow for further national decisions, RMA and local government regulation on water. Any privatisation of water would enable companies to run the water supply of cities and towns throughout Aoteaoro for 30+ years.

Under a TPPA, foreign water companies could get powers to sue the government for compensation if a government cancelled private contracts for water supply. Cancellation of a contract could happen through a challenge to a water company for a breach of Treaty provisions in the RMA. Bolivia and Argentina have been involved in huge legal challenges for cancelling water contracts.

What are the expected benefits of the TPPA?

Economic interests hope there will be better access for Fonterra into the huge US market, and to achieve this it will be worth some sacrifice of national autonomy. The TPPA fits with government support for free trade. It is thought that the TPPA will lead to an Asia-Pacific Free Trade agreement.

The TPPA is proposed as the benchmark or ‘gold standard’ for trade agreements for the 21st Century.

As US economist Joseph Stiglitz said in 2008, “Most of these ‘free trade’ agreements are ... managed for the advantage of the United States, which has the bulk of the negotiating power.”

Resources:

There is plenty of information on the TPPA Watch website: http://tppwatch.org/what-is-tppa/
The contributors to Jane Kelsey’s book ‘No Ordinary Deal’ give remarkably interesting and accessible insights into the TPPA.

linked? Watch out. Now is the time to make representations on your Regional Policy Statements and Plans, and District Plans. Check out what is in them lest you find prospecting, high impact exploration (which can be like a motorway cutting for a “bulk sample”) or mining coming near you.

Currently, the Minister of Conservation may not approve applications with impacts on land and vegetation and other conservation values: the industry wants this restriction to be relaxed or removed. This was certainly pushed for by Newmont, the company behind Waihi Gold, that has applied for many exploration licences covering hundreds of square kilometres in the Coromandel, in Northland, and has mining interests around Waihi which it wishes to expand.

Like most other mining interests, including Rio Tinto’s Iron Ore Division in Perth which made submissions, Straterra opposed the government’s proposal to remove their rights, to move automatically from wide scale prospecting to exploration, or from exploration to mining permits. The government proposal would fix the hazard for land owners and occupiers who agree to one stage of minerals activity but find that the company can move right on to hugely more impacting activities.

Submitter Barry MacDonell wants automatic access to all crown land, including all DoC land for prospecting. This would mean no matter how sensitive the ecosystem, it would be up for grabs.

In the Coromandel, Newmont in the form of Waihi Gold has a raft of applications, including one from inland Tairua one ridge inland of the coast, through the Whenuakite valley and arcing round past Hot Water Beach, Cooks Beach and up to Whitianga and Kuaotunu. This prospecting licence, granted in January 2012, is 222.5 square km and the applicant must take at least 100 samples over 24 months.

The Coal Association’s Chris Baker, like other industry players, pressed for a new Purpose of the Crown Minerals Act, with promoting attractiveness for business and investment a key objective. The environment and community are likely to suffer if that is done. This has been echoed in other industry submissions so we can probably expect that such objectives will be in the Purpose and will tilt decision making in favour of the mining industry.

Who owns the minerals?

The Crown owns all petroleum, gold, silver, and uranium, and may own the other minerals. Who owns those other minerals, and access to the minerals, depends on the land act in force when the land was alienated from the Crown. Any land alienated (sold by) the Crown since 1991 reserved all minerals to the Crown. Owners with “Victorian Title” will have ownership of the minerals and ownership of the right of access to minerals.

Entry on to land

The conflict between land owners’ and occupiers’ right to use the land, and those who want to use minerals was resolved by a past government by providing land owners and occupiers the right to refuse access to minerals activity, except in the case of so-called minimum impact activities – which may allow some cutting of vegetation and other impacts, see page 4 for details.

Under the Crown Minerals Act as it stands, in general, land owners and occupiers can withhold consent for access to land. Minerals permit holders must give notice of their intention to enter land. For a sense of what is allowed under each permit type, see page 4.

The exception to the right of owners and occupiers to deny entry to land by permit holders is for minimum impact activities. For these, permit holders have to provide 10 days notice to owners and occupiers and to any customary marine title group under the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 (No 3). Any attempt by owners, occupiers or others to obstruct such “minimum impact activities” can be over-ridden by court order. See definitions overleaf.

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Crown Mineral Act Definitions:

What is allowed under each permit type?

Permitted activities are partly defined in the law, partly by the prevailing minerals programmes, and partly by the consent and regulations.

Prospecting means any activity undertaken for the purpose of identifying land likely to contain exploitable mineral deposits or occurrences; and includes—(a) geological, geochemical, and geophysical surveys; and (b) the taking of samples by hand or hand held methods; and (c) aerial surveys

Such permits may cover hundreds or thousands of square kilometres.

Minimum impact activity means any of the following: (a) geological, geochemical, and geophysical surveying; (b) taking samples by hand or hand held methods; (c) aerial surveying; (d) land surveying; (e) any activity prescribed as a minimum impact activity in the minerals programme; (f) any lawful act incidental to any activity to which paragraphs (a) to (e) relate to the extent that it does not involve any activity that results in impacts of greater than minimum scale and in no circumstances shall include activities involving—(g) the cutting, destroying, removing, or injury of any vegetation on greater than a minimum scale; or (h) the use of explosives; or (i) damage to improvements, stock, or chattels on any land; or (j) any breach of the provisions of this or any other Act, including provisions in relation to protected native plants, water, noise, and historic sites; or (k) the use of more persons for any particular activity than is reasonably necessary; or (l) any impacts prescribed as prohibited impacts; or (m) entry on land prescribed as prohibited land.

Explanation means any activity undertaken for the purpose of identifying potential mineral deposits or occurrences and evaluating the feasibility of mining particular deposits or occurrences of 1 or more minerals; and includes any drilling, dredging, or excavations (whether surface or subsurface) that are reasonably necessary to determine the nature and size of a mineral deposit or occurrence; and to explore has a corresponding meaning.

Such permits are likely to allow multiple drill sites with accompanying clearance of vegetation, tracks, and flattening areas; high impact activities, including “bulk sampling” which can be huge earth works, or dredging large areas.

Mining means to take, win, or extract, by whatever means, a mineral existing in its natural state in land, or a chemical substance from that mineral, for the purpose of obtaining the mineral or chemical substance; but does not include prospecting or exploration; and to mine has a corresponding meaning.

Mining operations means operations in connection with mining, exploring, or prospecting for any Crown owned mineral including—(a) the extraction, transport, treatment, processing, and separation of any mineral; and (b) the construction, maintenance, and operation of any works, structures, and other land improvements, and of any machinery, and equipment, connected with such operations; and (c) the removal of overburden by mechanical or other means, and the stacking, deposit, storage, and treatment of any substance considered to contain any mineral; and (d) the deposit or discharge of any mineral, material, debris, tailings, refuse, or wastewater produced from or consequent on, any such operations; and (e) the doing of all lawful acts incidental or conducive to any such operations when carried out at or near the site where the mining, exploration, or prospecting is carried out.

1. The deal is being negotiated in secret. Agreements are not being made public until well after a deal is signed.
2. There will be a major and irreversible loss of sovereignty (and for Aotearoa NZ, tino rangatiratanga) for member states.
3. Other US-inspired trade agreements have given corporations the right to sue governments for loss of expected profits or thwarted investments. An example is the Mexican government being sued for denying a permit to a US company on environmental pollution grounds. In Australia, tobacco giant Philip Morris is suing the government for imposing packaging controls.
4. The TPPA is not so much about trade, as about access of US corporations to New Zealand markets and to our resources. The terms of what is understood to be in the proposed agreement will seriously undermine New Zealand regulations. At present blood is provided free by donation. It is expected not only that blood could become a tradable commodity, but also that it would no longer be free.
5. Governments are likely to be vulnerable for loss of expected profits claims if they on environmental or other grounds try to protect the interests of their people through regulations. Pharmac, which provides beneficial regulation of medicines and regulation of prices, will have to give way to more commercial and competitive market interests.
6. It is believed that one agendum is to shore up US influence in Pacific countries against China.
7. Although secrecy prevents a clearer understanding of the likely impacts, it is expected that the Agreement could facilitate the sale of land assets to foreign investors by lowering the barriers to such sales. This is also a Treaty issue because it removes such assets from being available for Treaty settlements and it would prevent preferential options for sale to Maori, independent of Treaty settlements.

Some of the main reasons for opposition are:

- Treaty settlements
- Special rights for foreign investors
- Loss of sovereignty
- Loss of resource control
- Loss of environmental protections

Some Questions:

- Why should we be concerned about the TPPA?
- What will be the price of blood? What losses of sovereignty? Will the price of food go up?

Now is the time to join the campaign. Auckland law professor Jane Kelsey is providing well researched information and speaking at various venues to set out the issues.
A pioneer of penguin studies and conservation, and an inspiring teacher of natural history, Dr Lance Richdale was a man possessed. This New Zealander has been described as the father of albatross research and a legend in seabird science generally. His studies of the yellow-eyed penguin, royal albatross and other seabirds were both epic and internationally acclaimed. He guarded the albatrosses of Taiaroa Head near Dunedin to ensure the first fledging in 1938 – a colony that thrives there today. In 2009, the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust together with the Otago Peninsula Trust formed a joint charity called The Lance Richdale Trust (CC44241) with the sole purpose of writing and publishing an autobiography on Dr Lance Richdale.

As an itinerant teacher based at Dunedin, he toured schools throughout Otago for over 30 years, and was dubbed ‘Mr Rich, the Nature Study Man’ by children he inspired.

The book is authored by well-known Dunedin writer Neville Peat, recipient of the 2007 Creative New Zealand Michael King Writers’ Fellowship. The foreword is written by Christopher Robertson of Wellington, an eminent seabird scientist, who knew Dr Richdale, worked on scientific papers with him, and has collected all of the material published by him.

Seabird Genius – The Story of L. E. Richdale, the Royal Albatross and the Yellow-eyed Penguin, was published by Otago University Press in November 2011. Copies are available from various book stores and the University Bookshop, Dunedin http://www.unibooks.co.nz

Review submitted by ECO Member group: Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust

IUCN Publications

ECO is a member of IUCN - the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and part of the IUCN Oceania region’s network.

Below are some recent publications published by IUCN that may be relevant to the work of some of our Friends and Member groups.

Island invasives: eradication and management: proceedings of the International Conference on Island Invasives

This conference in Auckland in 2010 covered any aspect of invasive species relating to natural insular ecosystems.

Both of these publications can be downloaded from the IUCN Oceania resources page.

Quota Management System is no guarantee of sustainability

by Cath Wallace

The New Zealand quota management system is no guarantee of sustainability and consumers should look for industry independent guides of fisheries.

The fishing industry assertion that because fisheries are managed under the Quota Management System consumers need not worry about whether they are ecologically unsustainable are incorrect.

There is a common and carefully cultivated misconception that the NZ Quota Management System delivers superb fisheries management, but this is not true. “Consumers should pay attention to non-industry sources of information about which fish to avoid and which are ok to eat.”

The latest assessment by the Ministry for the Environment on marine indicators reported a worsening trend on the state of New Zealand fisheries – “in 2010, 31% of assessed fish stocks were overfished, compared with 15% in 2007.” (see p5, Brief to the Incoming Minister, Ministry for the Environment, 2011).

Too often, the catch limits set by the Minister of Fisheries follow down a fish stock as it plungers, rather than preventing the fall. Recent examples include orange roughy stocks, bluenose and black cardinal fish.

The ecological impacts of fishing such as destruction of the living corals and other organisms on the sea floor and the deaths of sea lions, fur seals, and seabirds are not taken into account or are given only slight weight in decisions.

Fur seals are killed in the hundreds in the hoki fishery and sea lions are caught in the squid fishery and charted to become extinct in 35 years.

Bottom trawling is indiscriminate in what it kills: everything attached to the sea floor in the path of the huge nets.

The fish stocks themselves too often have been driven to ecologically low levels and sometimes are at serious risk of collapse. Significant economic losses attach in the long run to over-fishing, as well as the ecological disturbance of removing or disrupting predator prey relationships.

Every orange roughy stock – one the huge export dollar earner as these fish were “mined” out for short run profits – is now less than 20% of the original fish stock size. Orange roughy export values was worth $42 million in 2010-11 which is under a quarter of the exports in 1995 of $170m. This means we have lost

ECO Annual Conference 2012

The ECO Annual Conference and AGM will be held in Wellington from 6-8 July 2012.

PLEASE DIARY THIS NOW!

The Conference will look at the need for environmental leadership, responsibility and good governance in an open society focussing on particular issues such as changes to the RMA, the EEZ legislation, Antarctica and the Southern Ocean and more.

Friday and Saturday’s programme will be held at the Salvation Army Citadel, 92 Vivian Street. The AGM will be held at 2.10pm on Saturday, 7 July, at the Salvation Army Citadel for representatives from our Member Groups.

Sunday will involve a ceremonial tree-planting in the morning and two workshops, to be held at Turnbull House, Bowen Street, opposite Parliament.

The ECO conference planning committee welcomes comments or suggestions as we develop the programme. See our conference leaflet enclosed for further info on the programme.

Early bird rates and discounted rates for all members and friends of ECO will be available. You can register your interest now by emailing eco@eco.org.nz

We look forward to seeing you in July.

ECOlink March 2012

Various

The New Zealand quota management system is no guarantee of sustainability and consumers should look for industry independent guides of fisheries.

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the natural capital that underpins jobs and on-going prosperity.

The Challenger and Puysegur orange roughy stocks were estimated to be down at 3% and 6% of the original fish stock size when they were closed. The Minister of Fisheries has allowed fishing to start again in these fisheries before they have recovered.

The Quota system has allowed a huge asset strip of the New Zealand fish stocks because of relentless industry influence and no public controls.

Bluenose is another fish that is long lived at about 60 years old, though orange roughy live to about 120 years. They are slow growing and any recovery of the stock will take a long time. Blue nose stocks are down to about 15% of the original biomass. They live in middle depth seamounts and are caught by long lines and trawl nets.

Black cardinal fish are another long lived (100+ years) deep water species and these are down to about 13% of the original biomass.

There is talk of a recovery of the hoki fish stocks but the response has been a high risk strategy of treating these as definitely recovered and an increase in the fish catch allowed. This is risky and takes no account of the collateral damage to fur seals, sea birds and the sea floor dwelling species damaged by trawling.

Several quota management species are actually groups of two or more species which are managed as one with just one gazetted commercial catch limit an approach which is ecological madness. Examples include: jack mackerel (3 species); flatfish (8 species); deepwater orees (3 species); hapuku/bass (2 species); and arrow squid (2 species) which have different depth and geographical distributions, different stock sizes, rates of growth, and productivity.

“The happy fiction that the Quota Management System is a guarantee of sustainability is far from the truth” says Cath Wallace. “Consumers should take note of Forest and Birds’ guidance on which fish to eat and which to avoid.”

See the Best Fish Guide at www.bestfishguide.org.nz

Examples of overfished fish stocks from the current Ministry of Fisheries Plenary Reports 2011 include:

- **Bluenose** – “Horn et al. (2010) estimated a maximum age of 76 years, approximately twice the previous maximum age estimate.” “Biomass is estimated to have declined continuously since the 1980s and has been below the default target biomass [40% of initial unfished biomass B0] since around 2000. Very Unlikely (< 10%) to be at or above the default Target (MPD range B2011 = 14-27% B0)”

- **Snapper** – West Coast North Island (SNA8) – “The 2005 stock assessment indicated that current biomass (start of year 2004-05) was between 8% and 12% B0. Challenger (SNA7) – “Lack of older age classes [8+ years] implies that the available stock biomass should be strongly affected by recruitment variability.” “There is no evidence of a rebuild as suggested by the 2000-01 stock assessment.”

- **Orange roughy** – North-West Chatham Rise – “The Alldatrun suggested that B2006 was approximately 11% B0, and the Nobiomass run slightly lower (9% B0).” East and South Chatham Rise – “B2010 was estimated to be 7-18% B0 depending on assumptions.” “B2010 is Very Likely (> 90%) to be below the Soft Limit [20%Bo]; B2010 is About as Likely as Not (40-60%) to be below the Hard Limit [10%Bo].” Challenger orange roughy – “Biomass declined steeply through the 1980s and did not appear to have increased by 2000 when the fishery was closed. Survey results from 2009 suggest that biomass has increased since the closure.”

- **Black cardinal fish** – East Coast and Chatham Rise – “B2009 was estimated to be 12% B0; Likely (> 60%) to be below the Soft Limit [20%Bo].”

What are your feelings about Monarch butterflies? You may say you studied them in primary school and learned all about metamorphosis. And you’re so used to seeing them that you probably think they’re a bit passé, a bit mundane. Now your interests lie in addressing fracking and kauri dieback or the bigger issues that need our attention.

Sadly, there are many people who aren’t interested in the environment. They don’t realise how important it is – how we are a part of it. In our work (The Monarch Butterfly New Zealand Trust) we meet people who are afraid of anything that moves... anything that is natural. Especially recent arrivals in New Zealand.

But let us go back a step...

The Monarch Butterfly NZ Trust was formed seven years ago when we realised that one of the overwintering places of the Monarch Butterfly in New Zealand was under threat from developers. We worked alongside the intended developer to educate them about the need for looking after New Zealand’s flora and fauna, introducing them to New Zealand’s endemic butterflies. In the end, the development did not proceed, but was our work finished?

No!

By this time we had gained the interest of many people throughout the country who were asking more questions. Some wanted to protect Monarch butterflies. Others asked what we were doing about New Zealand’s endemic butterflies. And others asked us to look after moths too.

Some people were devastated to see wasps attacking butterflies in their gardens, and others who had run out of swan plants were taking a cross-city drive to save a few caterpillars.

This showed us how out of touch many people are with environmental issues. They see it as a specialist topic, the ‘environment’ has nothing much to do with them. Many people put ‘natural’ things onto their ‘I like’/‘don’t like’ lists. On the ‘I like’ are Monarch butterflies, earthworms and roses and on the ‘I don’t like’ list are Cabbage White butterflies, worms, wasps, moths and flies. They don’t understand the hypocrisy of driving miles in their car to save a few caterpillars, which would have provided food for predators in the boom and bust cycles of Nature.

As well, action is being taken in schools on the big things: dolphins, kiwi, kereru and kauri, children are sorely undereducated about insects which make up 80% of the total number of species.

So the Monarch Butterfly New Zealand Trust now exists to educate others about New Zealand’s butterflies and moths, and hopefully to get them thinking about other aspects of the environment. The Monarch is our flag flyer, opening doors. We have an interactive website, and we are running courses on creating butterfly gardens and habitat. We are working alongside schools and individuals tagging Monarch butterflies, a real science project which will provide sightings data for future years to be used by scientists and students alike.

We will have exhibitions at the Canterbury Museum in February and will also be at the Ellerslie International Flower Show, in Christchurch from 7-11 March. The Monarch continues to be our messenger. Will we meet you there?
ECO’s role in Antarctic Conservation Work
by Cath Wallace

ECO’s role in Antarctic conservation work is set to intensify with the Antarctic Ocean Alliance’s international campaign for the creation of a network of large marine protected areas in the Southern Ocean and especially for the Ross Sea to be created as a no-take marine protected area. ECO is a member of the Antarctic Ocean Alliance and is joined by Greenpeace NZ, Forest and Bird and other New Zealand organisations.

ECO has actively pursued Antarctic conservation since 1982 when we became the coordinating focal point for the New Zealand branch of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition, ASOC, which is administering the AOA campaign now.

In 1982 Antarctic Treaty Countries operated in great secrecy and set about developing rules for mining in Antarctica. That was primarily about oil. ECO played, along with Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, a key role in challenging the whole idea of rules for mining in favour of environmental protection rules and a permanent ban on mining.

From 1982 to 1990 that campaign grew from a handful of us to a major international campaign. The Treaty Parties negotiated a Minerals Regime from 1982-1988. When they opened up the Regime for signature, they found that ASOC’s campaign work meant intense global public opposition and the deflection of several countries. New Zealand wanted the Regime and our diplomat Chris Beeby had chaired the negotiations very ably. But ECO and ASOC believed that this skill was misdirected and that environmental protection rules were needed instead.

By the end of 1989 the Minerals Regime was in trouble, and instead the Treaty Parties set about negotiating the Environmental Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty, including provision for protected areas and an indefinite ban on mining which cannot even begin to be challenged until about 2050 under the Protocol.

ECO’s work on all this was internationally recognised, but that was not all. We have worked on Antarctic marine issues via the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, CCAMLR, with Barry Weeber, ECO co-chair being a regular at those meetings, often on the NZ delegation, sometimes with ASOC. Barry is au fait with CCAMLR scientific Committee processes and technical detail and the processes and issues of the Commission itself.

New Antarctic campaign aims to protect Southern Ocean

The Antarctic Ocean Alliance (AOA) is working to establish a large-scale network of marine protected areas and no-take marine reserves to protect Antarctica’s key ocean habitats and wildlife from human interference.

The AOA is a coalition of leading environmental organizations and philanthropists, including the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC), ECO, Forest & Bird, WWF, Mission Blue, Greenpeace, The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) The Blue Marine Foundation, The Last Ocean, Oceans 5; associate partners Oceana, the Natural Resources Defence Council (NRDC), and other groups worldwide.

The Southern Ocean and seas around Antarctica are some of the most pristine in the world – and the last place on Earth still relatively untouched by human activity. This beautiful, icy ocean environment is home to nearly 10,000 highly adapted species, many of which can be found nowhere else on the planet. Adélie and emperor penguins, Antarctic petrels and minke whales, Ross Sea killer whales, colossal squid and Weddell seals all thrive in this inhospitable climate.

Global ocean circulation is largely driven by the deep water formation around Antarctica’s coast, driving heat transfer and transporting essential nutrients to the rest of the world’s oceans.

One of the crown jewels of the Antarctic is the Ross Sea. While marine ecosystems in other parts of the globe are threatened and devastated by development, pollution, mining, oil drilling and overfishing, Antarcti-ca’s Ross Sea – the ocean equivalent of Africa’s great plains because of its richness of marine life – remains one of the most intact marine ecosystems on the planet, with large populations of all of its top predators still present.

With 85% of the world’s fisheries classified as over exploited, fully exploited, depleted, or recovering from depletion according to the UN’s Food and Agriculture Association (FAO), even Antarctica’s slow-growing, deep sea species are sought by legal and illegal fishing interests.

Antarctica’s oceans are now under increasing pressure from commercial fishing interests, particularly for krill and long-lived toothfish.

ECO link March 2012

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Antarctica is a critical laboratory for the study of climate change as global impacts increase. Antarctic ice cores provide an essential history of greenhouse gas levels and global temperatures.

Already some parts of Antarctica have experienced significant ice retreat and collapse of ice shelves along the Antarctic Peninsula, the direct result of regional climate change.

**Why Antarctica’s oceans, why now?**

About 70% of our Earth’s surface is ocean, yet less than 1% of it is fully protected from human development. This opportunity to create a network of no-take areas in an order of magnitude greater than anything that has been achieved before, will allow us to establish vital protection of Southern Ocean marine reserves and marine protected areas. With the likelihood of climate change impacts increasing, the preservation of this largely pristine marine ecosystem will help restore life in depleted areas, build resilience and provide a place for important scientific study.

The Commission on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), has set a timeframe for establishing an unspecified number of Antarctic marine protected areas by 2012. There is now an unprecedented window of opportunity to establish the world’s largest network of no-take marine reserves and marine protected areas in the oceans around Antarctica as a legacy for future generations.

The Antarctic Ocean Alliance is about to release its own proposal that aims to protect the entire Ross Sea ecosystem.

New Zealand is a critical player in the Antarctic Treaty system and is a very active player in CCAMLR, which is the part of the ATS that governs marine management. New Zealand is one of the main fishing nations, one of seven states with Antarctic territorial claims suspended by the Antarctic Treaty (having claimed sovereignty in the Ross Sea region, known as the Ross Dependency). It invests significantly in scientific research in Southern Ocean fisheries and Antarctic science in general, conducts monitoring control and surveillance for Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing and technical support to CCAMLR. As such it can wield considerable influence over the process of setting allowable takes for toothfish. It’s vital that New Zealanders persuade the New Zealand government to strengthen its proposal for a Ross Sea marine reserve to protect the entire Ross Sea region.

**How to get involved**

If you are an organisation, you can get involved in the campaign by:
- Hosting a public talk in your town about the campaign
- Encouraging your members to “JOIN THE WATCH” of CCAMLR and sign the online petition on www.antarcticocean.org
- Create a link to the Antarctic Ocean Alliance on your website.

If you are an individual:
- JOIN THE WATCH of CCAMLR and sign the online petition on www.antarcticocean.org
- Like the Antarctic Ocean Alliance – New Zealand page on Facebook
- Write to Foreign Affairs Minister Murray McCully and tell him you want the southern ocean protected
- Give ECO a donation to help its work on the campaign.

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