

Industry takes unprecedented step to drive Antarctic marine protection

At the UN Ocean Conference 2025, Aker QRILL Company announced its ongoing advocacy and ambitions to protect 70% of the Antarctic Peninsula.

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Announcement at UN Ocean Conference

The companies are committed to lead the industry and working with nations to achieve consensus for a proposed 455,957 km² Marine Protected Area (MPA) around the Antarctic Peninsula at the 2025 Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) meeting.

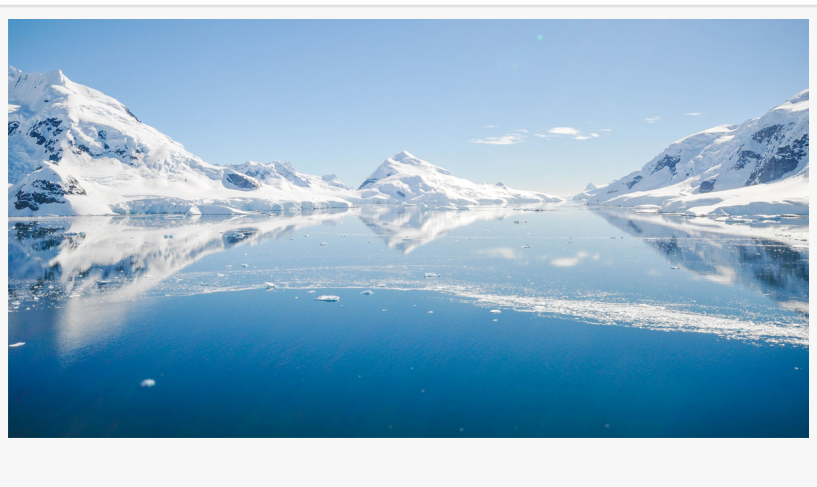
“ We believe that science-based management and genuine dialogue across nations can create progress. The industry is ready to act for conservation.”

Matts Johansen, Chairman of the Board, Aker QRILL Company

The proposed MPA, tabled by Argentina and Chile and developed over nearly a decade of scientific work in CCAMLR, would become one of the world's largest marine protected areas and represent a significant contribution toward the UN's 30x30 ocean protection goal. The initiative follows CCAMLR negotiations in October 2024, which ended without conclusions on new MPAs.

"This is about taking responsibility for the future of Antarctica," said Matts Johansen, Chairman of the Board at Aker QRILL Company and CEO of Aker BioMarine. "We believe that science-based

management and genuine dialogue across nations can create progress. The industry is ready to act for conservation – closing off vast fishing areas with direct impact on our operations, but necessary for the long-term preservation and management of Antarctica. With this MPA, 12% of Antarctica is fully protected compared to 2,3% of oceans globally"



The industry's approach has included direct diplomatic engagement with key stakeholders. In May and April 2025, Aker QRILL Company representatives met with Chinese government officials, scientists, and industry leaders to discuss the MPA proposal, demonstrating that constructive dialogue remains possible independent of the broader global geopolitical picture.

Antarktisregionen er et av verdens største og mest uberørte havområder. Det er et område som har vært underlagt en forsiktig forvaltning siden 1981.

The krill fishing industry operates under the precautionary management framework established by CCAMLR in 1981. Current harvesting represents less than 1% of the estimated 63 million metric ton krill biomass in the Antarctic Peninsula area, with catch limits unchanged since 1991. The industry has already demonstrated its commitment to conservation through voluntary measures since 2019, closing 74,000 km² around vulnerable penguin colonies.

"The Antarctic krill fishery has always been managed with conservation as the priority," Johansen noted. "Now we're ready to take the next step – advocating for permanent protection of critical areas while ensuring sustainable, science-based quotas where fishing continues. We believe China is a key stakeholder to seek alignment with, and also a nation with vast volumes of Antarctic scientific data. As an industry, we listen to China and we have a good dialogue where we've had hugely fruitful conversations in Beijing and Qingdao that we want to build on". With the global population expected to grow by nearly 2 billion by 2050, the demand for sustainable food sources will only increase. The ocean must be part of the solution—but only if managed responsibly and the vulnerable ecosystems are protected through science-based approaches.

The proposed MPA combines elements from years of negotiations, addressing both conservation needs and sustainable fishery management. Red zones would be permanently closed to all extractive activities, while blue zones would have seasonal closures to protect critical breeding and feeding periods for marine wildlife.

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The industry initiative represents a novel approach to international environmental diplomacy, with private sector actors collaborating to advance conservation goals where traditional diplomatic channels have been stalled. The effort acknowledges that achieving consensus at

CCAMLR requires engagement with all member nations, including those with different perspectives on marine protection.

The Antarctic krill industry's initiative aims to demonstrate that economic interests and conservation goals can align when guided by scientific evidence and long-term thinking. Success would establish a new model for industry-led environmental advocacy in international forums. The 2025 CCAMLR meeting represents a critical opportunity to advance both conservation and sustainable use objectives in Antarctic waters, with industry support potentially providing the momentum needed to achieve consensus among the commission's 27 member nations.

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