



WHY IS THE MANAGEMENT OF ANTARCTICA SO INEQUITABLE? AN ISLAND PERSPECTIVE

BY SEBASTIAN YANKOVIC OF THE RAPA NUI OCEAN COUNCIL AND
JULIO CHAMORRO OF THE JUAN FERNANDEZ ISLAND COMMUNITY

Each year, we learn of proceedings at the annual meeting of the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) after they have happened. We do not have a seat at the table, we have no vote in what happens in Antarctica, yet if you draw a line south from our islands there is nothing between us and the continent. We could only look on in horror as the trigger limit for krill fishing was reached this year. As island custodians of some of the largest marine protected areas in the world, we understand the pressure that industry can bring. Antarctica has no community to protect it, we must all be that voice. Our call to the countries in the negotiating rooms this week in CCAMLR is to do your job. Protect Antarctica, close the Southern Ocean to fishing.

Antarctica is connected to many parts of the global south. The whales that migrate northwards connect our islands and the countries of South America and Africa. These animals are part of our history, culture and economies. Yet other countries from the global north determine their fate. It feels like the industrial krill fishing countries are doing their best to weaken the Antarctic ecosystem. Some countries, appear to act at the bidding of the companies. CCAMLR itself seems to act at the bidding of these companies. Why is this permitted? Surely it is because the world does not see it and CCAMLR, shrouded in secrecy, permits it to happen.

We hear often that the science allows this targeting of krill. But there is no science that can really map how industrial plunder is affecting the whales, penguins, seals and seabirds. It seems particularly offensive that countries target the most biologically sensitive parts of Antarctica to catch krill. Beyond the foundation of Antarctica's food web, krill are

critical allies in the fight against climate change. By feeding on phytoplankton and then releasing carbon-rich waste that sinks into the deep ocean, krill help lock away carbon for centuries. Yet, climate change is not considered in krill fishery management. Industrial fishing of krill could severely undermine Antarctica's critical role in the climate system. Why do we risk the climate stability of our islands, which would be rapidly affected if the Antarctic ecosystem collapsed, for the sake of profit for a few individuals?

Antarctica is a global conservation challenge. Global voices like our own must be considered in its future management. If our small group of island people can bring about protection of huge amounts of the global ocean, surely the rich and developed nations in CCAMLR can do better. They must, for all of our futures.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sebastián Yankovic

Sebastián Yankovic Pakarati is a Rapa Nui-born natural heritage expert, specializing in Eastern-Pacific seabirds and island ecosystems on Rapa Nui. He is a leader with the Rapa Nui Sea Council, championing community-led marine protection, advocating for Indigenous stewardship of the ocean.

Julio Chamorro

Julio Manuel Chamorro Solís is a lifelong islander of the Juan Fernández Archipelago and a seventh-generation small-scale fisher. Julio serves as president of the local community organisation (Organización Comunitaria Funcional Mar de Juan Fernández) and coordinates biological-fishery monitoring for the archipelago and the Desventuradas Islands.

ANTARCTIC AVENGERS