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Environment

Australia to create world's largest marine reserve

By **Matthew Knight**, CNN
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The Australian government has announced a draft plan to protect the Coral Sea

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

Australian government announces plan to create world's largest marine reserve

The Coral Sea, which includes the Great Barrier Reef, lies off northeast of Australia

Nearly one million square kilometers of sea will be protected under the plan

Critics argue that plan doesn't protect species-rich western half of Coral Sea

(CNN) -- The Australian government has announced plans to establish the world's largest protected marine area in the Coral Sea.

The proposed Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve will cover 989,842 square kilometers (around 380,000 square miles) -- an area roughly one tenth the size of the U.S.

"Australia's vast oceans provide a source of food and resources, and are a place of recreation. But we cannot afford to be complacent," Australia's environment minister Tony Burke said.

"In the space of one lifetime, the world's oceans have gone from being relatively pristine to being under increasing pressure.

The environmental significance of the Coral Sea lies in its diverse array of coral reefs, sandy cays, deep sea plains and canyons.

Tony Burke, Australia's environment minister

"The environmental significance of the Coral Sea lies in its diverse array of coral reefs, sandy cays, deep sea plains and canyons. It contains more than 20 outstanding examples of isolated tropical reefs, sandy cays and islands," he added.

The Coral Sea is located off Australia's northeast coast and stretches from the Great Barrier Reef to Papua New Guinea in the north and the Solomon Islands in the east.

Its shallow reef systems, say the Australian government, support tropical ecosystems abundant in hard and soft corals, sponges, algae, fish communities and other creatures such as nautilus and sea stars.

The largely uninhabited islands also support critical

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nesting sites for green turtles and a range of seabird species.

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[Protect Our Coral Sea](#) -- an environmental campaign group supported by several conservation organizations -- described the announcement as "a good start," but said the plans fall short of full protection for coral and marine life.

"Only the eastern half of this ocean treasure has been set aside as a safe haven for marine life. The western half contains most of the species-rich coral reefs and critical spawning sites for black marlin and threatened tuna," Darren Kindleysides from the Australian Marine Conservation Society said in a statement.

There now follows a 90-day public consultation period which the government says will assist in finalizing the proposals.

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Menthus

Lo! Anyone else think that Australia was finally not being little girls boosting there "Marine reserves". I honestly thought they were talking about soldier but I should have guessed it was something to do with nature.

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darfut

When the U.S falls and becomes a part of MEXICO, I look for wealthy white Americans to flock to Australia and New Zealand. These countries will thrive while the U.S. will become a big cesspool. After all how many millionaires can a burrito stand make.

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Menthus

Why move to Australia then? Go to Canada, Second largest country in the world, is the world leading producers in, gold, diamonds, nickel, uranium and lead, came out with the least government debt in the G8, has the seconded most proven oil reserves in the world other than Saudi Arabia, Vast amounts ... [more](#)

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r5t6y7

fishing in various forms will still be allowed in 49% of this park. my source for this info is the Office of the Australian federal minister for the environment tony burke.

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elong21

Go Australia! I'll put another shrimp on the barbie for you! Pop open a Fosters mate and let's celebrate!

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nova703

What exactly does a protected marine area mean? Will fishing be banned in that area? What about ships? This article doesn't really explain much.

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r5t6y7

fishing is allowed in 49% of this park

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BBoy705

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