

## Managing the Patagonian Large Marine Ecosystem (PLME)

Seminar Presentation Abstract

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Large Marine Ecosystems (LMES) are regions of ocean space encompassing coastal areas from river basins and estuaries to the seaward boundaries of continental shelves and the outer margins of the major current systems. A global effort is currently underway to manage and improve the long-term sustainability of resources and environments of the world's 64 LMES and linked watersheds.<sup>i</sup> The Patagonian Large Marine Ecosystem (PLME) does not yet have a management scheme. The PLME is 2 million square kilometers, linking Antarctic waters of the south with tropical waters of the north. It is the largest LME in the Southern Hemisphere, and has a distinctive bathymetry and hydrography. Argentina and Uruguay are the two countries bordering the PLME, both of which have 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones. Agreement towards a management scheme for the PLME has not been achieved because of differing jurisdictions and acceptance of international customary and conventional law between the nations. Additionally, the 1982 Falklands conflict between Argentina and Great Britain has influenced governance and fisheries management around the Falklands/Malvinas Islands, making an agreed upon management scheme difficult to attain.

The best and largest trawling areas for Argentina are found over the Patagonian shelf and the Falkland area. This is the sole source of food for colonies of marine mammals and birds along the coast of Patagonia and the Falkland Archipelago, yet the PLME is facing numerous threats. The Argentinean coastal population is rapidly growing, leading to increased pollution from sewage and ships. Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported (IUU) fishing has also been problematic in the area, creating unsustainable conditions for the marine ecosystem. Fines of about \$350,000 have been imposed to deter illegal fishing, however IUU continues. Authorities have reported that some fishing crews have actually sunk their boats and escaped to other vessels, presumably to avoid penalties.<sup>ii</sup>

Research will focus on the international management of the PLME, and will identify relevant policy issues and stakeholder interests. This research also seeks to identify potential gaps that may exist between government initiatives, local concerns, and current conservation efforts. The end result will be the production of a policy framework for enhanced management of the PLME, as well as a list of policy recommendations for a state supported management scheme. Ultimately, this research will contribute towards global efforts to improve the long-term sustainability of the world's LMES and linked watersheds.

Research will be conducted with semi-structured interviews of relevant stakeholders, including government officials, local populations, and conservationists in the area. Current management efforts will be evaluated, and a comparative analysis will be conducted between the management of the PLME and the management of other LMES throughout the world. Based upon the evaluation of this research a policy framework for the management of the PLME will be produced.

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<sup>i</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. 2003. *Large Marine Ecosystems of the World*. Accessed February 10, 2006 from: <http://www.edc.uri.edu/lme/intro.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> Washington Post Foreign Service. 2005. *Argentina Casts a Net to Catch Poachers*. Accessed March 11, 2006 from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/21/AR2005052100589.html>