FISHERMEN and the National Party have lashed out at a plan calling for the whopping 1 million sq km Coral Sea to be protected as marine park, labelling it insane.

The US Pew Environment Group, scientists and sailors want the area put aside as the world's largest marine park, with all fishing to be banned.

Queensland Seafood Industry Association spokesman Robin Hansen said yesterday the proposal was simply over-the-top and based on an incorrect assumption that the area was over-fished.

Pew spokeswoman Imogen Zethoven said benefits to the environment far outweighed hardships that would be experienced by the fishing industry if the area was reserved.

"It would impact on a small number of operators who would need some assistance from the Federal Government but, on the other side of the ledger, protection would be a huge contribution to global marine conservation," she said.

"Its environmental significance and its historic importance as the site of the battle that turned the tide of WWII in our region make the Coral Sea a treasure worth protecting."

Senator Ron Boswell said Pew had crossed the line of insanity and food production would suffer as a result.

The area was a low-volume, high-value fishery and sustainable.

Senator Boswell said it was a disgrace that Pew used Coral Sea Battle commemorations to push their project.

"If they really want to do some environmental good, they should go back to their native US and have a look at what is happening back at home," he said.

Retired Vice Admiral David Shackleton, who is supporting the campaign, said that given the rapid decline of large ocean fish, the onset of climate change and other threats, better protection was needed.

The University of Queensland's Professor Hugh Possingham said the Coral Sea provided habitats for many species, including critically endangered hawksbill and endangered green turtles, 25 species of whales and dolphins and 27 species of sea bird.