



POLICY POSITION DEEP SEABED MINING

WWF Oceans Practice

Introduction

The ocean is under pressure from a multitude of stressors (climate change, overfishing, pollution, habitat destruction, acidification, noise, etc.). These stressors degrade ocean health by affecting species, disturbing areas important for biodiversity and ecosystem services and disrupting ecosystem functioning. Today, 66 per cent of the ocean area is experiencing increasing cumulative impacts.¹

Because of its sheer size, the deep-sea realm constitutes the largest contiguous habitat for species and ecosystem diversity on Earth, and supports many diverse ecosystem processes necessary for the Earth's natural systems to function.² The deep sea is also characterized by environmental conditions that make it highly vulnerable to human disturbance. The existing pressures and the fact that the deep sea contains a vast number of unexplored and unstudied ecosystems mean that extreme precaution is necessary at all times.

Instead of adding additional stressors further impacting upon ocean health, it is imperative that we work toward ocean protection and restoration, to ensure a healthy ocean that can provide social, economic and cultural benefits for humanity into the future.

Recent global reports³ are calling for transformational change in our use of the Earth's resources to reverse destructive and wasteful consumption patterns. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states 'We are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path'⁴, and calls for the protection of the ocean and for sustainable consumption and production.

¹ [Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#) (IPBES, May 2019)

² The United Nations First Integrated World Ocean Assessment (2016)

³ [Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#) (IPBES, May 2019) and the [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Climate Change's report on the Ocean and the Cryosphere](#) (IPCC/SROCC, September 2019)

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

Our position

A transformational change in how we use ocean and planetary resources is required if the world is to achieve the goals and aspirations, set by the United Nations Agenda 2030, for a better future for all. We need to steer urgently towards a truly sustainable and circular Blue Economy.

With this transformation in mind, deep seabed mining should not be permitted.

Exploration and extraction of deep seabed minerals will increase the human footprint on unknown and vulnerable ecosystems. Moreover, the commercial benefits of this type of resource exploitation typically are limited to a few companies while the risks and deep impacts are borne by wider society and the planet at large.

We need to replace the current linear 'take-make-dispose' industrial model by a circular economy that is based on sustainable ecological design and on the principles of reduce, reuse, recycle, refuse, refurbish and repair. As such, materials are maintained in the economy and resources are shared, while waste and negative impacts are designed out. A sustainable Circular Economy creates positive environmental and society-wide benefits and functions within planetary boundaries, supported by an alternative growth and consumption narrative, where a healthy living ocean provides sustained benefits to humanity.

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

WWF's vision for the ocean and people is a Sustainable Blue Economy, that:

- provides social and economic benefits for current and future generations;
- restores, protects and maintains the diversity, productivity and resilience of marine ecosystems, and;
- is based on clean technologies, renewable energy, and circular material flows.

Our commitment

WWF will work with partners across government, industry and civil society to implement this vision into practice.

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