

Deep-Sea Mining: Irreversible Damage or Essential Resource?

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Summary

Rising demand for minerals, driven partly by green technologies, has increased commercial interest in Deep-Sea Mining (DSM). EASAC challenges the narrative that DSM is essential for the energy transition, arguing it's misleading. Forecasts suggest terrestrial reserves and significantly improved recycling (potentially covering 40-77% of clean energy metal needs by 2050) could meet demand, especially considering technological innovation. DSM poses severe environmental risks, including the destruction of unique, slow-recovering deep-sea habitats and biodiversity over vast areas, impacts from sediment plumes, noise, and light pollution. Major knowledge gaps remain regarding deep-sea ecosystems and the full impact of mining. EASAC advocates for prioritizing the circular economy, exploring recycling fully, and developing robust scientific standards and regulations before considering any exploitation.

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Impacts

- Instructive NGO and Press Briefing
→ **Initiated partnerships (Blue Climate Initiative & deep sea conservation coalition) and a large worldwide media echo**
- Contacts to government representatives
→ **Increasing numbers of countries joined the call for a Deep-Sea Mining Moratorium (e.g. Sweden)**
- Cited in letter signed by 50 MEPs to Norway urging them to halt plans for Deep-Sea Mining in Arctic Waters (19 Nov 2024)
→ **Norway suspends plans for commercial-scale DSM on 2 Dec 2024**



Prof. Dan Kammen (University of California, Berkely, I.), Jeanne Everett (Blue Climate Initiative, m.) and Former EASAC Environment Programme Director Mike Norton (r.) at the 29th Session of the International Seabed Authority in Kingston, Jamaica

Facilitators and barriers:

- Growing public interest in the topic coupled increasing media attention (e.g. Last Week Tonight by Jon Oliver)
- Clear call to action by scientists, universities, academies and similar institutions sending a clear message to the media
→ **Puts governments and politicians under pressure**
- Heavy lobbying from industry in favour of DSM (e.g. The Metals Company)