

Groups call for seabed mining moratorium as first application goes in

Press release, 23 October 2013

As New Zealand's first application to mine ironsands from the seabed was lodged at the EPA this week, Kiwis Against Seabed Mining (KASM) leads a call for a moratorium on the untested practice.

On Monday, Trans Tasman Resources (TTR) [lodged their application](#) to mine the seabed off South Taranaki with the EPA. The EPA has yet to approve it and could send TTR back to do more homework before it opens the application up for public submissions.

"This is an entirely untested and experimental practice that we in New Zealand should take our time in considering," said Phil McCabe, Chairperson of KASM.

"There are vast knowledge gaps in our baseline understanding of the marine environment, let alone what the effects would be from this activity. The regulatory framework is inadequate and imbalanced, and the proposed economic model is far from best case," he said.

The [call for the moratorium](#) is, so far, supported by a number of different groups: Forest & Bird, Greenpeace, ECO, Sea Shepherd, Surfing Taranaki and Surfbreak Protection Society.

KASM believes, if implemented, the moratorium would give New Zealanders time to better understand the broader implications of such an industry operating at scale in our coastal waters in terms of recreation, environmental effects and the economic trade-offs that would ensue.

Already, the Governments of Australia's Northern Territory and Namibia have established moratoria on seabed mining off their coastlines, arguing that there simply isn't enough information to let it go ahead.

KASM is gearing up for the first hearing by the EPA under the new EEZ legislation.

"New Zealand is an island nation and we love our marine environment, and we love our black sands - the people of the North Island's west coast even more so than most. TTR sure are going to have a fight on their hands," says McCabe.

The KASM Moratorium call sets out six reasons why seabed mining should not go ahead in New Zealand:

- 1. Insufficient knowledge:** Our baseline understanding is incomplete, therefore it is not currently possible to adequately predict the environmental affects of seabed mining.
- 2. Cumulative effects unknown:** The marine environment is already under stress from industry, fishing and agriculture. How would the addition of this activity compound these effects?
- 3. Inadequate regulatory process:** The new EEZ legislation falls far short of the state of the art, participatory process that is needed to protect and maintain the integrity of our marine environment.
- 4. New Zealanders need both time and information:** We need full and free access to information and ample time to consider the long-term implications of this activity. We need to know what stands to be lost before it is put at risk.

5. Questionable economic and social impacts: In the case of ironsands, mining proposals feature predominant foreign ownership and no added value to raw resources onshore. Further, no consideration has been given to potential collateral damage to 'New Zealand Inc' caused by the establishment of this environmentally destructive industry.

6. Highly experimental and untested: the technology, and the impact of the world's largest seabed mining operation threatens not only our marine environment, but also New Zealand's international image and trade advantage.