

Seamounts-Bottom trawling update #6 – 17 July 2006

1 Fishing industry announces ban on bottom trawling in some areas of the Southern

Indian ocean -- good or bad news?

2 Australian Government stalls on the need for interim measures -- to address deep sea destruction

3 New UN report highlights need for action to protect deep sea ecosystems

Fishing industry proposal to voluntarily close some areas of the Southern Indian Ocean to bottom trawling. A drop in the ocean says the DSCC -- global action by Governments needed

On 6 July the Australian deep sea fishing company Austral, with three others international fishing companies, announced a partial voluntary closure of 11 areas in the Southern Indian Ocean from their fishing by deep sea trawling. The move came as government parties, including Australia, met in Rome to sign the 'Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement'.

The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition said the decision shows Austral are aware of the need to protect deep-sea life from the destruction caused by bottom trawling, but warned the voluntary closure alone will not solve the problem.

"It sounds like a large area but it is a tiny fraction of the South Indian Ocean - maybe as little as 2 per cent" said Lyn Goldsworthy, Australian representative of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition. "It's effectiveness in addressing deep sea destruction will depend on significance of the areas involved. It could be areas already fished out. It may cover areas that are unfishable. And it may not cover all the areas under threat - particularly fishable seamounts. The devil is in the detail," she said.

Read more of our commentary here: <http://www.savethehighseas.org/australia/>

Australian Government rejects Senate call for interim measures to protect deep sea life

On 19 June 2006 the Coalition Government did not support a Senate motion calling for short-term measures to protect the deep seas from the destructive fishing practice of bottom trawling until longer term arrangements for oceans governance are put in place.

The motion was presented by the Australian Greens and had the support of all the Opposition parties.

Ironically in October last year the Senate, with Government support, acknowledged the destructive impacts of high seas bottom trawling and the need for urgent action. Yet in June 2006 couldn't find the space to support the need for 'interim measures'.

Read our full media release and the text of the Senate motion at:
<http://www.savethehighseas.org/australia/>

New international report on high seas ecosystems and biodiversity -- urges need for urgent action

On 16 June 2006 the United Nations Environment Program with the World Conservation Union (IUCN) released its report on *Ecosystems and Biodiversity in Deep Waters and High Seas*.

The report found that "swift and wide ranging actions are needed to conserve the world's entire marine environment amid fears that humankind's exploitation of the deep seas and open oceans is rapidly passing the point of no return".

Over 90 per cent of the planet's living biomass-the weight of life-found is in the oceans. Yet less than 10 per cent of the oceans have been explored [90 per cent of the oceans remain unexplored] with only one millionth of the deep sea floor having been subject to biological investigations. The report argues many lessons learnt on conserving coastal waters should be adapted and applied right across the marine realm, including in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

The full report available is available at:
http://www.unep.org/pdf/IUCN_Report_16June06.pdf

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The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition is an alliance of over 50 international organizations, representing millions of people in countries around the world. It is calling for a moratorium on high seas bottom trawling until the nations of the world can establish strong management measures for deep-sea fisheries and protect biodiversity on the high seas. Australian Members are the Australian Conservation Foundation, The Wilderness Society and Greenpeace Australia Pacific.