

DSCC NEWS UPDATES

Bites from the Deep



January to June 2018: The past half year

DEEP-SEA FISHERIES

- In January, the DSCC attended the Sixth Meeting of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) Commission in Peru. New Zealand and Australia withdrew their support for a proposed amended bottom fishing measure following legal threats by the New Zealand fishing industry. This launched a new consultation process with the aim of proposing a new measure in January 2019. The Commission did agree on a measure allowing for a new lobster and crab fishery, despite counter advice from the Scientific Committee. [The DSCC said](#) the measure was not ready, did not follow fishing procedures, and that there was no scientific basis for the proposed catch limit. DSCC representatives continue to work with the New Zealand and Australian governments on these matters.
- In March, the DSCC participated in a workshop in Japan on the Protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs), organized by the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO) ABNJ Deep Seas Project. The workshop provided input from other regions and reviewed the latest VME-related research by NPFC deep-sea fishing nations. It provided recommendations to the NPFC for improved conservation measures and research initiatives to better protect VMEs.
- In April, the DSCC attended meetings of the Small Scientific Committee on Bottom Fish and the Small Scientific Committee on VMEs of the NPFC, also in Japan. Many of the helpful recommendations from the March workshop on VMEs were endorsed.

- In May, concerns about bottom trawling for orange roughy in New Zealand waters were reflected in a piece by [New Zealand Stuff](#). DSCC representatives are quoted on the New Zealand government dropping plans to restrict deep-sea trawling.
- In June, [the DSCC attended](#) the Fifth Meeting of the Parties of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) meeting in Thailand and called on the European Union to protect deep-water corals, instead of protecting its fleet's fishing activities. Australia proposed closing five areas known to contain VMEs following the advice of the Scientific Committee. Unfortunately, the EU refused to agree to the closures, questioning the scientific advice and the procedure. The DSCC is deeply disappointed with this outcome.
- DSCC member Ecology Action Center attended the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) Scientific Committee meeting in June, seeking to obtain conservation measures for the Greenland shark.

DEEP SEABED MINING

- In January, [the European Parliament adopted a resolution](#) on international oceans governance. It included a call to the Commission and EU Member States to support a moratorium on commercial seabed mining exploitation licenses until all possible risks have been studied and understood, and stressed the importance of transparency. A week later, at an event at European Parliament, the DSCC presented on the need for greater transparency by the International Seabed Authority (ISA) and for the ISA to ensure effective protection of the marine environment as is its obligation under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- In February, DSCC representatives participated in a workshop on the draft regulations for the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, co-sponsored by the Royal Society of the UK and the ISA in London. During February, the BBC also ran a piece titled "[The Secret on the ocean floor](#)" which talks about the history of seabed mining and highlights environmental concerns.

- In March, the DSCC attended a meeting of the ISA Council where Australia, Belgium and Germany called for the establishment of a Scientific Committee. Many States emphasized the need for regional environmental management plans (REMPs) to be integrated with the regulations, and to be in place before mining starts. Several also stressed the need for transparency (a top priority from the [DSCC's](#)



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[perspective](#)), and in particular for a broad definition of stakeholders for involvement in the process. Sky TV ran a documentary [“In too Deep: The race to save the seas”](#) which included an interview with a representative of the DSCC on deep-sea mining. The ISA released a draft Strategic Plan; the DSCC submitted a [formal response](#) in April.

- The ISA recently released a new Draft Regulations on Exploitation of Mineral Resources in the Area. DSCC will make recommendations available to States and observers in the 24th annual Session coming up in July.
- The DSCC attended two important workshop related to REMPs: 1) May - International Workshop on the REMP for the cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts in the triangle Area (in the north-west Pacific), organized by China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association of (COMRA), a contractor, in China; 2) June - Workshop on the development REMPs for oceanic ridge areas, held in Poland.
- In June, the DSCC attended a workshop organized by Belgium’s Ministries of Economics and Environment to discuss the country’s position on deep-sea mining. Belgium is a sponsoring state to an exploration contract signed in 2013 by the ISA with the Belgian company Global Sea Mineral Resources (GSR).

April marked the release of the 2017 DSCC Annual Report

OTHER

- In April the Intergovernmental Conference held a periodic meeting on an international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). IISD reporting services and ENB published a [summary of the meeting](#). The DSCC is monitoring negotiations to ensure that the deep sea is adequately covered.
- In May, the DSCC attended the [4th World Conference on Marine Biodiversity](#). Discussions focused on the protection and conservation of BBNJ and the deep ocean. DSCC representatives attended a one-day symposium hosted by the EU ATLAS project on the implications of change for sensitive deep-sea ecosystems and Kristina Gjerde, advisor to the DSCC, delivered a presentation on the multiple legal,



scientific and economic challenges to mining the deep sea. The DSCC also attended a meeting with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on developing new CBD targets for conserving marine biodiversity.

- Raising awareness of the problem of plastic pollution and encouraging action featured heavily in both World Environment Day (June 5) and World Ocean Day (June 8). A recent [study](#) shows that plastic has reached the world's deepest ocean where fragile ecosystems are especially vulnerable to such threats.

July – December 2018: The Next 6 Months

DEEP-SEA FISHERIES

- In July, the DSCC will attend the NPFC Annual Meeting to advocate for the adoption by Contracting Parties of the Scientific Committee's recommendations.
- In September, the DSCC will attend NAFO's 40th Annual Meeting in Estonia to support efforts to close all seamounts to bottom trawling in the area regulated by NAFO and to advocate for progress on a full impact assessment of fisheries on VMEs.
- In November, the DSCC plans to attend the 37th Annual Meeting of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) in the UK, with a focus on improved management of the catch and bycatch of deep-sea species, particularly by EU fleets.



DEEP SEABED MINING

- In July, the DSCC will attend the 24th Session of the ISA in Jamaica. Negotiations will focus on developing regulations for commercial seabed mining in the international Area of the seabed. The DSCC will continue to push for reform of the ISA, including for the establishment of an Environment Committee and greater transparency, as well as for further development of REMPs.

OTHER

- The DSCC will work closely with the High Seas Alliance to strengthen the outcome of the BBNJ negotiations at the first UN Intergovernmental Conference in September.
- In October, the DSCC will also attend Our Ocean Conference in Bali to continue engaging with existing partners and build ties with new potential partners.



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