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27 June 2023

Consultation: Inquiry into Seabed mining in New Zealand
Environment Committee Komiti Whiriwhiri Take Taiao
1 Museum Street
Wellington 6160
Environment@parliament.govt.nz

Dear Sir/Madam

Inquiry into seabed mining in New Zealand

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Environment Committee's Inquiry into seabed mining in New Zealand. The West Coast Regional Council's (WCRC or the Council) submission is attached.

Our contact details for service are:

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We would be grateful for acknowledgement of receipt of our submission.

Yours faithfully

Fiona Thomson
Planning and Science Manager

About the Submitter

The West Coast Regional Council (WCRC) is the local authority for a region covering a vast area with a sparse population. The distance from Kahurangi Point in the north to Awarua Point in the south is the approximate distance from Auckland to Wellington.

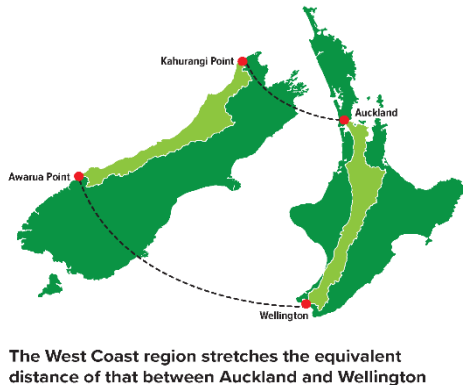


Figure 1: Map of New Zealand to highlight the 600km length of the West Coast Region compared to the distance between Auckland and Wellington.

As indicated in Figure 1, the West Coast coastline is approximately 600km in length. There is relatively little development in the Region's Coastal Marine Area, over which the Council has certain delegated responsibilities under the Resource Management Act.

The West Coast Regional Council works closely with the regions' three territorial authorities (the Buller, Grey, and Westland District Councils). The main towns are Westport, Greymouth, Reefton, and Hokitika. The region's relatively low population of approximately 32,600 is spread across small towns, settlements, and rural communities.

Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae and Te Rūnanga o Makaawhio (of Poutini Ngāi Tahu – PNT) are mana whenua of Te Tai o Poutini (the West Coast). The 'Paetae Kotahitanga ki Te Tai Poutini Partnership Protocol, Whakahono ā Rohe Resource Management Act Iwi Participation Agreement; A Protocol and Arrangement between Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae, Te Rūnanga o Makaawhio, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and the West Coast Regional Council of October 2020' captures the intent of WCRC and its partners to progress our relationship in accordance with the Treaty of Waitangi partnership between iwi and the Crown.

The West Coast is predominantly rural.

The Conservation Estate comprises 84.17% of the West Coast land area, with an additional 1.55% administered by Land Information New Zealand (LINZ). This leaves 14.28% of land available for private ownership. The land in the Conservation estate and Crown ownership is not rateable by local authorities.

Infometrics data on 'Contribution to employment by broad sector, 2022' shows the West Coast region having a predominantly 'services' orientated economy:

- 'Other services' accounted for 40%;
- 'High value services' 23.2%;
- 'Goods-producing industries' 22.1%; and
- 'Primary industries' made a 14.8% contribution.

Whereas, Infometrics more detailed 'Filled jobs by 54 industry categories list' shows the percentage contribution to the West Coast's regional economy, as at 2022, as:

- Health Care and Social Assistance - 11.1%;
- Accommodation and Food Services - 9%;
- Dairy Cattle Farming - 6.1% (and dairy product manufacturing 3%);
- Education and Training - 6.1%; and
- Construction Services - 4.4%.¹

¹ Structure of West Coast Region's Economy; Source Infometrics at <https://ecoprofile.infometrics.co.nz/West%20Coast%20Region/Employment/Structure>, last viewed 29 May 2023.

West Coast Regional Council Submission on Environment Committee's Inquiry into Seabed mining in New Zealand

The Council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Environment's Committee's Inquiry into seabed mining in New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and an area of the continental shelf.

Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae have advised that they are opposed to seabed mining.

The West Coast Regional Council (WCRC or the Council) does not have any scientific or technical knowledge to contribute to the inquiry into seabed mining in New Zealand's EEZ and Continental Shelf. As a regulatory agency the Council also does not have a position on seabed mining, but understands our Treaty partner's view on it.

If any seabed mining were to occur in the future in these national ocean areas which could affect the West Coast coastal marine area, the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 provides policy direction for coastal management under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). Additionally, under Section 30 of the RMA and Section 644 of the Natural and Built Environments Act 2022 (NBEA), regional councils have responsibilities for managing effect of activities in the Coastal Marine Area, including marine oil spill responses.

Given our functions set out by both the RMA and NBEA, the Council wishes to have a say in any future proposal for seabed mining, if a proposal is put forward.

Furthermore, the Council understands that seabed mining can have potentially significant adverse environmental effects, and has concerns about any potential adverse effects on fishing grounds and other areas of cultural, recreational and commercial significance. Council understands that a precautionary approach to a seabed mining proposal would be more appropriate where disturbance, deposition or discharge could adversely affect ecosystems and recognised values and uses.

Recommendation:

The West Coast Regional Council must be consulted and have a say in any future proposal for seabed mining in or near the West Coast coastal marine area which may adversely affect it, to ensure that the Council can undertake its duties and functions required by the NZCPS and the Resource Management legislation.

This ends our submission.