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Information Paper from Te Ipukarea Society

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Submitted by Te Ipukarea Society



December 1, 2023.

Rarotonga, Cook Islands

INFORMATION PAPER FROM TE IPUKAREA SOCIETY

Firstly we would like to extend our appreciation for being included as an observer at this, the first WCPFC annual session to be held in Rarotonga.

We would like to provide this very brief paper to stimulate some discussion on an emerging threat to tuna fisheries in the WCPFC area.

Consideration of potential impacts of deep seabed mining on tuna fisheries

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to raise awareness of the potential risk to the valuable tuna fishery in the WCPFC from deep seabed mining if this industry were to begin.

Summary

- a. There have been a number of papers written by well respected marine scientists on the potential risks to tuna fisheries from deep seabed mining. Links to several of these are provided below under the Attachments heading.

These risks have so far appear not to have been considered at the WCPFC session or any of the Scientific Committee meetings. The issue has however been raised at the IATTC (see attachment link)

The WCPFC and/or the FFA are best placed to advise on the current value of tuna fisheries in the region from industrial fisheries. Harder to estimate is the value of

the tuna and other pelagic fish to the tourism/charter fishing industry and the small scale commercial and subsistence catch from around each of the islands.

b. Financial implications.

Extensive research by independent researchers will be required to provide a realistic assessment of the potential impacts of deep seabed mining to our tuna fishery, before any commercial extraction of minerals should be considered. The research will be very costly. We ask that WCPFC make enquiries with other regional CROP agencies, including SPC, FFA, and SPREP, and any other potential sources of funding, for this work.

Conclusion

Seabed mining should not be considered until the implications on the commercial and subsistence tuna fishery are better understood.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the WCPFC consider the information provided in the references below, and make an appropriate recommendation to ensure that the required research is conducted prior to any commercial seabed mining beginning in the international waters of the Pacific Ocean.

Attachment

Links are provided below to several background papers to inform this discussion.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s44183-023-00016-8>

<https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2011914117>

https://www.iattc.org/GetAttachment/60531be9-c19f-4f7d-abc9-29cc4a669a4a/WGEB-01-MISC_Deep-sea-Mining-Brief.pdf

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X21001755>

<https://bit.ly/DSM-Impacts-NoduleMining>