



Our role in New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone

August 2018

Our offshore environment is rich with natural resources and home to diverse ecosystems. In our role as New Zealand's Environmental Protection Authority, we make sure that certain activities in the ocean within our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) follow the rules. Find out more [here](#).

The expanse of ocean around New Zealand helps to support our economy and our way of life. As an island nation our identity is closely entwined with our oceans.

Our offshore oil and gas exploration and extraction are a part of our economy. Oil is a major export commodity for New Zealand, and our natural gas reserves are a source of energy in the North Island for industry and homes. Prospecting companies are exploring the seabed to find the minerals we need; New Zealand has significant offshore resources of ironsand and phosphate nodules.

The ocean is also used for dumping material. To keep our ports and harbours working, many are regularly dredged, and this material may be dumped into the deeper ocean. We also

rely on the ocean to link up some of our telecommunications, using submarine cables on the seabed to connect us by phone, and the internet, to the rest of the world. Some marine activities produce wastes that need to be discharged into the marine environment.

At the same time, the ocean is a food source and has cultural and spiritual significance for Māori. It is home to many unique and unexplored ecosystems.

In fact, much of the ocean is unknown to us. It is one of our remaining frontiers for exploration, due to the challenges of working at great depths of water, sometimes kilometres deep. The surface of the moon is better mapped than much of the world's ocean floor.



We are an independent body

At the EPA, our role is as the 'regulator' of activities in the ocean within our EEZ and continental shelf (figure below). This means we make sure that certain activities follow the rules set out in New Zealand law. We regulate activities related to:

- marine scientific research
- oil and gas exploration and development
- mineral prospecting and seabed mining
- installation of structures, facilities and pipelines
- space vehicle launches over the ocean
- burials at sea
- different types of dumping and discharges
- decommissioning of structures, like offshore facilities and pipelines

We don't make or write the rules. Our role is written into the law, in the Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf (Environmental Effects) Act 2012 (the EEZ Act) and associated regulations. These laws are guided by international agreements which look after the world's oceans.

The Ministry for the Environment is responsible for advising the government on the law in the EEZ and continental shelf. We, the EPA, are an independent agency whose job is to make sure the law is followed. We maintain a compliance and enforcement capability to support this.

We work closely with a number of other government agencies to regulate and manage a range of overlapping responsibilities in the EEZ. This multi-agency focus on managing the expanse of ocean around New Zealand ensures that we use our ocean and its resources sustainably and responsibly, while contributing to our economy and our way of life as an island nation.

New Zealand's offshore waters include: the territorial sea within 12 nautical miles of the coast (managed by the regional councils), the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) 12–200 nautical miles from the coast, and the area mapped as our continental shelf. We, the EPA, are responsible for managing the effects of certain activities in the area of ocean within the EEZ and continental shelf.



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