

# ASSESSING THE IMPACTS OF DEEP SEA MINING IN THE WATER COLUMN

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PERSPECTIVES ON ADDRESSING AND CONSIDERING EMERGING SCIENCE  
PEW/RESOLVE WEBINAR

SEPTEMBER 21, 2020

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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***Recommendations for the guidance of contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration for marine minerals in the Area*** (ISBA/25/LTC/6) dated March 30, 2020 (under **Exploration Regulations**) (revised Recommendations)

Have substantive number of references/guidance dealing with water column characteristics. Annex 1 of the Document indicates that areas of focus have been expanded (aspects such as oceanography, sediment and plume dispersal, chemistry, pelagic communities, phytoplankton and primary productivity, zooplankton (both holo- and mero-plankton), gelatinous zooplankton, nekton, mesopelagic micronekton, larger mesopelagic taxa, fishes, noise, light, vertical migration, trace metals/contaminants in main species, marine mammals-birds.

This is improvement over previous document which had a strong benthic focus.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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Recommendations were developed after consultations with contractors, large number of scientists and other managers and specialists in many disciplines.

**Timing of issue** - the annual report of the contractors for 2021, will be the first opportunity to see how much more is being done with more extensive recommendations (**July 2021**).

But water column aspects were available for contractors to consider for years ago. “New” recommendations built on previous scientific workshops convened by the ISA on environmental baselines and monitoring: polymetallic nodules (1999), SMS (2006) and CRC (2006) where workshop reports were produced.

# PERIODIC REVIEWS AND ANNUAL REPORTS

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Under the Exploitations Regs, there are 5-year periodic reviews of implementation of plans of work. These are done jointly between SG and Contractor.

LTC is asked to provide comments to SG. The water column studies done by contractors are considered by the Commission as part of the its role in the periodic review process.

Also in the reviewing annual reports of contractors (now 30), water column studies are considered by the LTC. There is regular feedback from the LTC to contractors on the development and adequacy of their sampling programmes.

# EXPLOITATION REGULATIONS

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Draft Exploitation Regulations being developed in the Council (not on Council agenda for this year so March 2021?)

Part IV deals with Protection and Preservation of Marine Environment

The EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) template in the Draft Regulations specifically considers water column characteristics as well as specification of impacts and management measures to mitigate impacts.

The LTC is mandated to develop Standards and Guidelines (S&G) for the practical operation of the Regulations.

# GUIDELINES

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**Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment and the Environmental Impact Statement.** These Guidelines being developed by the LTC through a Technical Working Group has been convened under the Commission, and, is progressing these as time and work commitments allow. (Now working intersessionally)

Issues like the description of the water column environment (oceanography, chemistry, ecology etc.) as well as specification of impacts and management measures to mitigate impacts being expanded in the Guidelines.

# CONCLUSIONS

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Options to deal with water column impacts include developing Standards and Guidelines ( e.g. to mitigate impact of dewatering discharge)

These documents are not static, rather they are flexible and respond to changes in the state of knowledge and developments in Best Industry Practice, Best Environmental Practice, Best Available Scientific Information etc.

# THANK YOU

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## QUESTIONS

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