



Bodies involved in the seabed minerals sector

This factsheet explains who are the key government agencies and other bodies involved in the seabed minerals sector.

The Seabed Minerals Authority (Authority) is the lead Crown agency responsible for the management and regulation of all seabed minerals activities in the Cook Islands exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Other agencies share management responsibilities and provide advice to the Authority.

SEABED MINERALS AUTHORITY

The day-to-day management and regulation of licenses and licence holders is the primary role of the Authority, under the leadership of the Seabed Minerals Commissioner. An important aspect in the regulation of seabed mineral activities is that the Authority is an independent regulator, and while accountable to the responsible Minister, its regulatory decision-making is independent from government and potential political interference.

Other duties and responsibilities of the Authority, include:

- Processing applications for licenses (including due diligence on applicants)
- Regulating (monitoring, compliance and enforcement) on-going seabed mineral activities under an exploration or mining licence
- Coordinating the activities of the Licensing Panel and Advisory Committee
- Overseeing sponsored seabed mineral activities in the international seabed area
- Capacity development and training



RESPONSIBLE MINISTER

- Sets the policy direction for the seabed minerals sector
- Grants exploration and mining licenses (on the recommendation of a licensing panel), with approval by Cabinet



ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- Made up of community leaders representing various perspectives including: religious, aronga mana, environmental, private sector, sporting, youth and academic.
- Provide community perspectives to the Authority on the development of the seabed minerals sector

LICENSING PANEL

- Independent panel made up of experts from the following fields: extractives industries, engineering, financial, legal, environment, and maritime. Also includes a head of one of the central government agencies
- The Licensing Panel will assess and evaluate applications according to its merits, and provides recommendations to the Minister on whether to grant or decline an application





OTHER AGENCIES WITH A ROLE IN THE SEABED MINERALS SECTOR

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT SERVICE

- Responsible for the assessment and review of environmental matters relating to seabed minerals activities, including administering applications for environmental consents and permits,
- In conjunction with the Authority, the Service will have regulatory oversight of and ensure compliance with the environmental management and reporting requirements of a licence and the conditions of an environmental consent or permit



NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL

- Permitting authority for the environmental aspects of seabed mineral activities
- The Council will assess and review applications for environmental consents or project permits (depending on nature and scale of seabed mineral activity), and decide on whether to issue or decline such approvals

MINISTRY OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT

- Administration and management of tax policy and revenue aspects of seabed mineral activities
- Collection of royalties, income taxes etc. from mining operations at a future date
- To set-up a sovereign wealth fund to manage future wealth generation from seabed minerals operations



MARAE MOANA (COUNCIL AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP)

- Mandated under the Marae Moana Act 2017 (MM Act) to foster ecological use of the Marae Moana
- Seabed minerals activities are subject to the MM Act
- The Authority is a member of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and assists in the marine spatial planning process and possible marine management measures



MINISTRY OF MARINE RESOURCES

- Provide guidance and technical support to the Authority given its activities and experience in the marine space



MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

- Mandated to manage and regulate and investigate incidents (e.g. collisions, marine pollution) relating to vessels in Cook Island waters (normal ship operations)
- Matters such as pollution or discharges relating directly to seabed mineral activities fall under the Authority's mandate
- The MOT will assist the Authority in developing and implementing contingency plans and the investigation of incidents



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS & IMMIGRATION

- Communication and liaison with other governments and international fora on seabed minerals activities in the Cook Islands EEZ and the international seabed area
- Leverages contacts for technical and other assistance



MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

- Responsible for administering occupational health and safety requirements

