



Protecting New Zealand's Seabed from the impacts of bottom trawling

The area of ocean and seabed from 12 to 200 nautical miles from New Zealand's coastline is called the exclusive economic zone or EEZ. This area covers approximately 3.9 million square kilometres and is the fifth-largest EEZ in the world.

The depth of the sea within this area can extend to 10,000 metres. The marine landscapes within New Zealand's EEZ include spectacular underwater mountains, valleys, geysers, and muddy flats. These are home to corals, sponges, and other unique forms of marine life.

Fishing can damage the seabed and the corals, sponges and other life found there, particularly when bottom trawl or dredge fishing gear is used. How much damage occurs depends on a number of factors, including the type of seabed habitat that is being fished and the particular trawl gear being used.

The Fisheries New Zealand closely monitors bottom trawling as part of a comprehensive fisheries management regime. Controls on bottom trawling include closed areas and regular monitoring of where fishing vessels have fished, and the type and quantity of marine species, such as corals and sponges, which are caught.

Most of our EEZ is deeper than 1250 metres and there is very little bottom trawling below that depth in New Zealand. Scientists have calculated that more than 90 percent of the New Zealand EEZ has never been bottom trawled. However, Fisheries New Zealand continues to closely monitor this type of fishing activity to make sure that fishing effort remains within acceptable limits.





How do we manage the impacts of fishing on the seabed?

All human activity has some degree of impact on the natural environment. What is important is that these activities are closely monitored to ensure that impacts are managed and kept to an acceptable level.

In New Zealand one of the ways this is achieved on land is by setting aside large areas as national parks, where activities such as intensive farming are not permitted. In the marine environment the approach is no different. Large areas of the seabed have been closed to bottom trawling, and many of the corals and other species that are damaged by this method of fishing also live at greater depths where trawling does not occur.

In 2007, the New Zealand Government, with support of the fishing industry, closed 1.1 million square kilometres of seabed to bottom trawling and dredging – close to a third of New Zealand's entire EEZ. The 17 separate closed areas, known as benthic protection areas (BPAs), mainly cover areas of New Zealand waters that have never been trawled. The seabed within these areas is largely in an

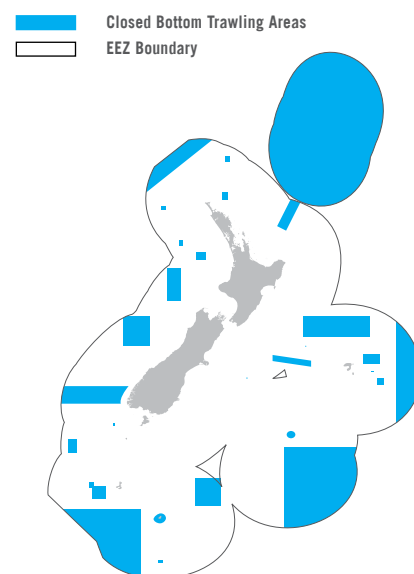
untouched state and includes the full range of deep-sea underwater landscapes that occur across the EEZ.

In addition to the BPAs, 18 areas around underwater seamounts and hydrothermal vents (underwater geysers) have been closed to all types of trawling because of the unique marine life that is found there. Across New Zealand's EEZ, half of all known seamounts and a significant number of known hydrothermal vents are closed to all trawling.

New Zealand is a world leader in successfully managing the effects that bottom trawling has on the seabed, closing one of the largest areas of marine space to bottom trawling in the world. Similar approaches are used in other countries to successfully manage bottom trawling as a viable fishing method.

Fisheries New Zealand understands that there is still work to be done to make sure efforts to protect the marine environment are ongoing. Now that BPAs are in place over large areas of the deepwater environment, Fisheries New Zealand is focusing on ensuring that the effects of bottom trawling in shallower waters closer to shore are also managed.

Areas closed to bottom trawling in New Zealand's EEZ



Did you know:

- More than a third of New Zealand waters are completely closed to bottom trawling and dredging.
- About 70 percent of the EEZ is deeper than 1250 metres, and very little of that has been bottom trawled.
- Of the remaining 30 percent of the EEZ, about three-quarters has never been bottom trawled.
- Benthic Protection Areas protect large areas of mostly pristine marine environment.
- New Zealand's bottom trawl closures are one of the largest national networks of protected areas and are recognised as being globally significant.