

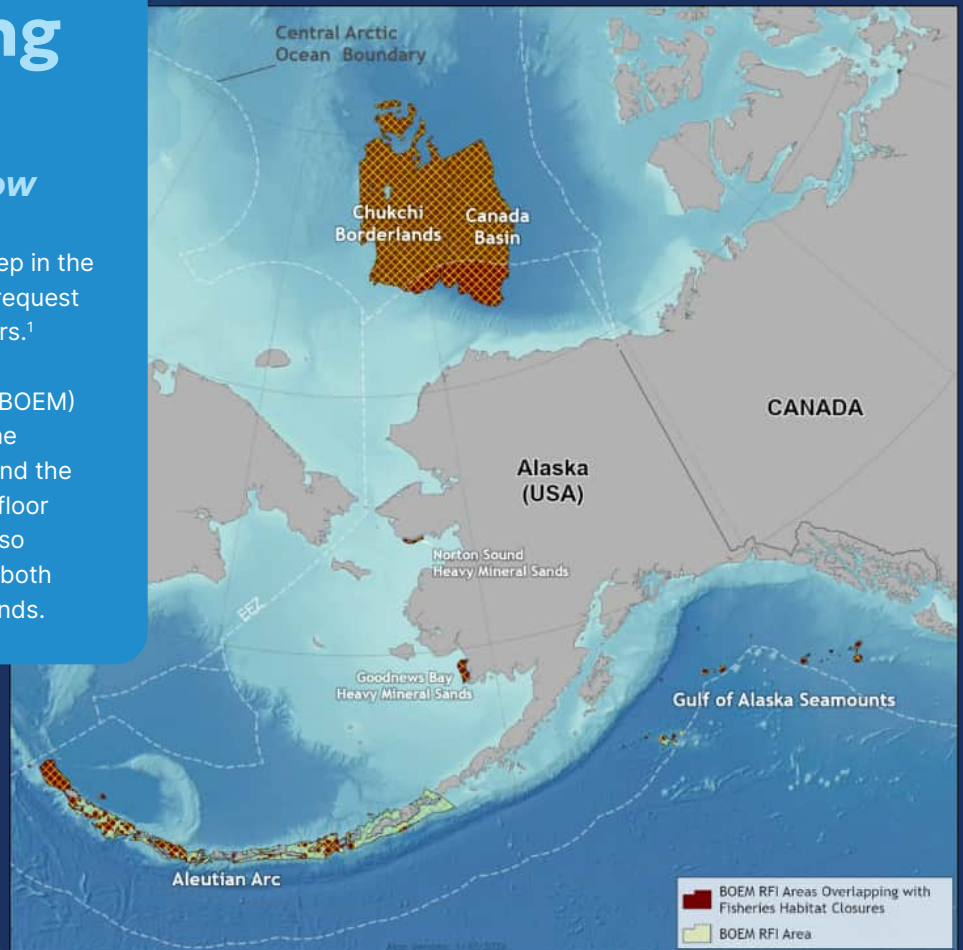
# Deep Sea Mining In Alaska

## What Alaskans Need to Know

The federal government initiated the first step in the offshore mineral leasing process through a request for information (RFI) targeting Alaska's waters.<sup>1</sup>

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) focused on the Gulf of Alaska seamounts, the Aleutian Islands, the Chukchi Borderlands, and the Canada Basin, which represent the U.S. seafloor claim in the Central Arctic Ocean. The RFI also includes Goodnews Bay and Norton Sound, both specifically designated for heavy mineral sands.

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Roughly 88% of BOEM's RFI Area in Alaska contains habitat features already closed to commercial fishing.



## Deep-Sea Mining Overview

**Deep-sea mining (DSM) refers to the process of extracting minerals from the offshore seabed. (Near-shore sourcing of sand, gravel, and minerals such as gold or diamonds is not typically considered DSM.)**

DSM is often portrayed as an essential future source of critical minerals and a means for some developing countries to increase revenue. However, financial analysts note that DSM has not been shown to be economically viable at any scale.

Currently, no DSM operations are in commercial production anywhere in the world. Globally, over 30 exploration permits exist, mostly in waters of the Pacific between Hawaii and Mexico.

BOEM initiated pathways to pursue DSM off U.S. coasts, starting with Alaska as the first state.

## What Alaskans Need to Know

### DSM is economically risky.

- In Alaska, the most likely scenario is that ore would be mined by foreign companies and shipped to processing facilities far from the state due to logistical and economic constraints.

### DSM risks the marine environment.

- Experts suggest that the damage to marine ecosystems, even with the best available technology, likely outweighs any potential benefits. Current extraction methods generate large underwater sediment plumes that can travel hundreds of miles on ocean currents. These plumes, along with noise and other pollutants, could significantly affect all parts of the food chain, from microscopic organisms to fish and marine mammals.

# What Alaskans Need to Know



## DSM threatens Alaska's fisheries.

- Alaska's fish stocks and the fisheries that depend on them are vulnerable to strip-mining techniques required to extract seafloor crust minerals.
- Alaska salmon from all regional river systems, for example, feed and grow throughout the North Pacific, relying on intact marine food webs and migratory corridors such as the Aleutian Islands.
- Similarly, the majority of Gulf of Alaska seamounts have been designated Essential Fish Habitat by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council due to their unique role in the Gulf of Alaska ecosystem.

## Domestic and international DSM are governed separately.

- The international seabed, where no country holds jurisdiction, is overseen by the United Nations International Seabed Authority (ISA) established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which is supported but unratified by the U.S. Domestically, DSM on U.S. Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) would be managed by BOEM under the legal framework of The Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) which includes a 1950's-era DSM provision with inadequate Tribal and community consultation, environmental protection, and commercial bonding requirements.

## What do we know about seabed minerals in Alaska?

Very little public information exists about seabed mineral deposits. The January 2026 RFI area for potential Alaska offshore DSM includes extensive subsea features like seamounts in the Gulf of Alaska, crustal areas in the Bering Sea, and ridges and seamounts in the Central Arctic Ocean that provide important habitat for marine fish and wildlife widely valued by Alaska communities.

As the map above shows, roughly 88% of the areas within the RFI area have already been designated critical habitat for threatened or endangered species, or Essential Fish Habitat, and are so important that managers have implemented partial or total closures to protect Alaska's fisheries and vital marine resources.

## Conclusion

Alaska would likely see minimal, if any, benefits from any potential DSM off its coast, but would bear the full brunt of DSM's negative impacts on fisheries, oceans, and communities.

While it is still early in the process, the recent RFI indicates that DSM leasing and prospecting are poised to ramp up rapidly, without regard for the well-being of the ocean or those who depend on it.

Alaska is not prepared to address the consequences of DSM in the adjacent OCS and beyond. Now is the time to weigh in to ensure deep-sea mining doesn't put Alaska's waters at risk.

**Alaska would likely see minimal, if any, benefits from any potential DSM off its coast, but would bear the full brunt of DSM's negative impacts on fisheries, oceans, and communities.**

<sup>1</sup>Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. "Potential Alaska Offshore Minerals Lease Sale" ( Jan. 29, 2026) <https://www.boem.gov/regions/alaska-ocs-region/potential-alaska-the-offshore-minerals-lease-sale>

<sup>2</sup>Fisheries habitat measures include: bottom trawling closures to protect habitat for marine species in the Aleutians and Gulf of Alaska seamounts made by the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council as well as a ban on all commercial fishing north of the Bering Strait made by the Council's Arctic Fisheries Management Plan in domestic waters and, for international waters, the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement led by the United States.