

Deep-Sea Mining in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone: Recent Developments

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Abstract

Deep-sea mining has seen several “false dawns” since this marine industrial activity emerged in the 1960s. This is because it presents particularly complex challenges due to its multi-faceted and interdependent technological, scientific, environmental, social, industrial, political, economic and legal aspects, all of which must be efficiently managed at both international and national governmental levels to achieve commercially viable results.

Recent developments in addressing these challenges for the currently most commercially attractive deep-sea hard mineral resource, the polymetallic nodules found under international waters in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone of the North Pacific Ocean, southeast of Hawai’i, have led to speculation that a more promising dawn for nodules, at least, may be imminent. This presentation describes these developments with particular regard to proposed extraction technologies, selected technical, scientific and environmental issues and the international regulatory context.