



# Say NO to Seabed Mining and YES to SB 5145

credit: The Pew Charitable Trusts

**Commercial and recreational fisheries, marine wildlife, coastal communities and cultures are at risk from potential emergence of this industry in Washington's nearshore waters.**

On January 12, Washington State Senators Kevin Van de Wege and Christine Rolfes [introduced SB 5145, a simple legislative fix](#) which adjusts the leasing authority of the Department of Natural Resources to prohibit permits and leases for seabed mining of hard minerals on state-owned marine aquatic lands.

Thirty years ago, scientists tested the impacts of seabed mining by dragging a plow over a swath of ocean floor in the eastern Pacific Ocean. The plow tracks from that experiment remain visible to this day, a testament to the lasting damage this new ocean industry could cause. In the hunt for gold, platinum, titanium, phosphorus, and other minerals, seabed mining industry interest could soon include the area from Washington's shoreline to a boundary 3 miles offshore, the seabed of which is managed by Washington's Department of Natural Resources.

Oregon addressed the threats from seabed mining in state waters in 1991, through legislation that prohibited the activity. However, California and Washington still accept applications for hard mineral exploration and extraction leases along their coasts, which in the absence of specific standards are considered on a case-by-case basis.



*Seabed mining could harm Dungeness crab and other important resources in Washington.*

## The Harm

Large machinery would remove or destroy sponges, corals, kelp forests and other marine life. Sediment clouds could travel long distances and smother or negatively impact the feeding plankton, benthic fish like halibut and groundfish, pelagic fish like salmon, tuna, billfish and forage fish, along with Southern Resident Killer Whales and other marine mammals throughout the region. Also at risk are the breathtaking beaches, tidepools, and rocky reaches that help support a multimillion-dollar tourism industry.

## WA can be proactive with SB 5145

As long as seabed mining is legal, associated industries are likely to pursue action. For example, last year a Florida-based marine exploration company indicated it will continue to push a phosphate seabed mining project in Mexico's federal waters despite two permit rejections. Interest in mining mineral rich black sands, known to harbor iron, titanium and other minerals, has existed since at least the late 1800s along the Washington coast from Cape Flattery to the Columbia River. Without precautionary action via SB 5145, lease applications from industry could appear.

The State of Washington should enact SB 5145 to proactively close its state waters to seabed mining for hard minerals. Oregon has demonstrated that this careful conservation approach is feasible, far-sighted, and reasonable. And for the coastal towns, cities, and fishing and tourism industries that depend on these valuable but vulnerable waters for their livelihoods, it is a necessary precaution.

## Contact

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## Resources

- [13-minute video](#) – seabed mining threat in WA
- [Infographic on Seabed Mining](#)
- Twin Harbors Waterkeeper: [Why you should care about seabed mining](#)
- Surfrider Washington: [A new coastal threat on the horizon: Seabed Mining](#)
- Pew: [Seabed Mining Could Threaten West Coast Fisheries and Communities](#)
- Popular Mechanics: [Sea Floor Mining Is Basically as Bad as It Sounds](#)
- Atlantic: [History's Largest Mining Operation Is About to Begin](#)
- PNAS: [Midwater ecosystems must be considered when evaluating environmental risks of deep-sea mining](#)



Young resident killer whale chases a chinook. Credit: John Durban,



Rockfish gorgonian soft coral Credit: Ed Bowlby, NOAA



Redbanded rockfish. Credit: Ed Bowlby, NOAA Olympic Coast NMS