

Letter from the Chair – Annual Report 2021

Herewith we present the Annual Report for the Stichting Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC), covering the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021. The content has been prepared in accordance with Part 9 of the Dutch Civil Code.

Since its establishment in 2004, the DSCC has focused on two overarching goals:

- To substantially reduce the greatest threats to life in the deep sea; and
- To safeguard the long-term health, integrity and resilience of deep-sea ecosystems.

We work to raise awareness, prompt debate, and secure international agreements and regulations to protect deep-sea ecosystems and biodiversity, and in so doing, set important precedents for wider ocean conservation.

Due to the continued restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, much of our activities has continued online in 2021, with ongoing challenges for the DSCC and our partners to influence debate and ensure a level playing field for civil society. Despite this context, we made real progress in mobilizing support for a moratorium on deep-sea mining (DSM) and securing specific new protections for vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) in the deep sea.

1. Fisheries

1.1. Regional Fisheries Management Organizations

South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO)

We have begun to see the impact of the new government elected in New Zealand in October 2020. Together with the pressure created by the DSCC-coordinated public petition – 52,000 people calling on the government to ban bottom trawl fishing on seamounts and similar deep-sea features – this has created new momentum and a more favourable context for change. A small delegation from DSCC joined the virtual South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) Commission meeting in late January. The revelation of a vulnerable marine ecosystem (VME) encounter by a New Zealand vessel among other issues gave us a good opportunity to escalate scrutiny on the New Zealand position [from the media](#) and the Minister's office.

Following the SPRFMO Commission meeting, we:

- Sent a joint letter to the Minister of Oceans and Fisheries from local NGOs and the DSCC, setting out a range of asks on trawling and seamounts for both NZ waters and the high seas. The timely release of a study in Nature on carbon release from bottom trawling was incorporated into the letter.

- Worked with Members of Parliament to pressure the Minister with both questions in parliament and for written answer on trawling issues. This inspired the Green Party to call for a ban on bottom trawling. Their campaign launched in March, in part through their own petition to the Minister of Oceans and Fisheries.
- Delivered a substantial document of evidence in support of the DSCC's November 2020 petition. Both were included on the agenda of the Environment Select Committee.
- Engaged in South Pacific Fisheries Working Group meetings, a science forum on bottom fisheries.
- Joined meetings of the New Zealand working groups on benthic science and on the spatial management and zonation agenda of the Ministry for Primary Industries.

We also participated in the 9th meeting of the SPRFMO Scientific Committee held virtually in September-October. There we progressed the bottom fishing regulation, submitting a briefing on the precautionary and ecosystem approaches and a paper on the definition of an ecosystem. We also worked to improve the taxa encounter thresholds, particularly for sponges. Further, in collaboration with member organization Conservation International, we made a number of interventions supporting Chile's marine protected area proposal and opposing the EU's proposal for acoustic and catch surveys on the Nazca Ridge, pointing out the endemic nature of the fish there and its value as a hotbed of biodiversity. We will continue work in capitals on the Dutch/EU destructive fishing efforts in this area.

Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO)

NAFO scientists completed a five-year review in 2021 of all existing information on where VMEs are located. Through our partner member, Oceans North, the DSCC has been working to systematize the identification and proposed protections for all seamounts in the NAFO area. During a meeting of the Working Group on Ecosystem Science and Assessments in March, we were successful in gaining scientific agreement on this new process. This resulted in significant expansions and additions of seamounts and knolls proposed for protection.

In the September annual meeting, NAFO agreed to close many more seamounts to deep-sea trawling based on a proposal from the United States and Canada. In addition, a number of deep-water ecosystems formed by corals, sponges, seapens, and other habitat-forming species along the Grand Banks and Flemish Cap beyond Canada's national waters off Newfoundland were also closed to bottom fishing. All seamounts and other features less than 4000 m depth are now fully protected from any future bottom fishing, covering an area of some 100,000 km. However, four of the closures proposed by NAFO scientists were rejected leaving the ecosystems in these areas unprotected.

Canada's authorizations of oil and gas activities on the high seas within some of the areas closed by NAFO to protect VMEs highlights the need for a new high seas treaty to protect biodiversity and ensure cross-sectoral cooperation.

North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC)

This year, we continued to push for the closure of seamounts to bottom trawl fishing, in particular those that ICES has previously proposed for closures. We also continued to argue for the closure of the fishery for roundnose grenadier.

South Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)

Key issues for the DSCC at the 8th Meeting of the Parties, held virtually in July, were progressing the finalization of a SIOFA-wide bottom fishing measure which is overdue; development of a footprint; elaboration of an appropriate VME taxa list (including sponges, which are currently far too high at 3000 kg); and the Saya del Malha. We presented a paper on the problem of bottom trawling in the seagrass beds of Saya de Malha. Interventions by the DSCC, Thailand and Mauritius called for an immediate cessation of trawling, with weak support from the EU. In the end, the Scientific Committee was requested to conduct further studies of the ecology of the Bank and the potential impact of bottom trawling on its ecosystem. We will continue to pursue both the fisheries footprint and the sponge challenges in the Scientific Committee.

Overall progress continues to be slow, partly because virtual nature of the meetings. The Southern Indian Ocean remains an area of the high seas where few seamounts are protected from bottom trawl fishing.

North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC)

At the 2021 Annual Meeting of the NPFC in February, a Japanese proposal to ban bottom trawling in two additional seamount areas where it had been permitted was adopted. In addition, the US reiterated a proposal to suspend all bottom trawl fishing on seamounts. To strengthen and consolidate support within the US government for this proposal, we organized briefings for US government officials and brought more US-based NGOs onboard. In addition to advocating for a phase-out of bottom trawling on seamounts in the region, we are working to have the NPFC regulations amended to prohibit 'exploratory' fishing in areas closed to protect VMEs.

1.2. European Union

Key progress in the European Union (EU) included an agreement by the Commission to maintain its 2016 regulation for the management of deep-sea fisheries intact. The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) has recommended VME area closures to bottom trawl fishing at depths between 400-800 m to protect cold water corals and other biodiversity hotspots, as required by the regulation. DSCC [recommendations](#) on deep-sea fisheries regarding the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 were approved in a plenary vote on the Biodiversity Strategy in the EU Parliament in June.

1.3. Building Support

We worked closely with the [Coral Reefs of the High Seas Coalition](#). They produced a number of useful reports on the biodiversity values of corals in the deep seas, particularly in the Pacific region this year. We also maintained ongoing liaison and consultations with deep-sea scientists individually and through participation in the Deep-Ocean Stewardship Initiative (DOSI) and other networks. Measurable outputs include scientific submissions to and fielding scientists for meetings of regulatory bodies and/or related workshops. Papers and publications in which DSCC members were involved in 2021 include:

- Currie and Weeber (2021) [The Precautionary Approach and Ecosystem Approach in the context of Prevention of Significant Adverse Impacts on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems](#)
- DSCC (2021). [Protecting Global Seamounts: A Briefing Document](#)
- Goddard, K., Thomas, K., Weeber, B. (2021). [Save Deep Sea Corals: Ban bottom trawling on seamounts](#)
- Watling and Auster (2021). [Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems, Communities, and Indicator Species: Confusing Concepts for Conservation of Seamounts](#)

The DSCC continues to raise its visibility as an expert voice and authority on threats to deep-sea biodiversity reflected in significant coverage of the Coalition and its members in social and legacy media stories on deep-sea fisheries in 2021, including in [Forbes](#), [Scoop NZ](#) and [Vox](#).

2. Deep Seabed Mining Moratorium

2.1. Building political will

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress, postponed from June 2020 to September 2021, was a significant event for our moratorium campaign. The DSCC participated primarily to ensure a positive vote for [Motion 069](#), a powerful statement calling for a moratorium on DSM. Thanks at least in part to our participating in and hosting of a range of activities in the opening days of the Congress, and extensive lobbying both inside the meeting and around the world virtually, the Congress voted overwhelmingly in favour of the Motion: 82% of the government votes were in favour, and 95% of the civil society vote. The Motion later adopted as [Resolution 122](#).

Throughout the year, we supported a set of early country champions for a moratorium. We built on existing positions countries have expressed either formally or informally in support of a moratorium on DSM, encouraging governments to engage proactively at the International Seabed Authority (ISA). Examples of progress at the national level include:

- ✓ In January, Oceans North and MiningWatch Canada sent a joint letter, supported by 14 other environment and social organizations, to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs; Environment and Climate Change; Natural Resources; and Fisheries, Oceans and Coastguard. The letter

requested, “that Canada continue its environmental leadership role and support a moratorium on deep seabed mining”.

- ✓ In April, GSR’s Patania II was stranded on seabed in the CCZ, an accident which received substantial media attention in Belgium and around the world. In May, the Green Parties (Ecolo and Groen) presented a proposal for a resolution on biodiversity to the Environment Committee.
- ✓ In the US, a law was passed in May to permanently protect Washington State’s marine environment from seabed mining. In December, Guam adopted a legislative resolution calling on the ISA to adopt moratorium on DSM. EarthJustice sent [a letter](#) to the Biden Administration, signed among others by Senator Perez.
- ✓ Australia’s Northern Territory similarly declared a ban on seabed mining in its coastal waters, citing the potential impact on the environment, sacred Indigenous sites and marine industries.
- ✓ Several parliamentary questions were placed in the UK from April-August by various parties. In May, Greenpeace and Blue Marine Foundation released an analysis showing that DSM exploration licenses granted by the government to UK Seabed Resources (US weapons giant Lockheed Martin’s UK subsidiary) are riddled with inaccuracies, based on outdated legislation and could be unlawful.
- ✓ The European Parliament adopted a resolution containing a call on:
 - The Commission and Member States to promote a moratorium, including at the ISA, on DSM until it can be managed to ensure no marine biodiversity loss nor degradation of marine ecosystems;
 - The Commission to cease funding for the development of seabed mining technology in consistency with a circular economy; and
 - Member States and the Commission to ensure transparency at the ISA as well as effective protection and preservation of the marine environment in line with UNCLOS.
- ✓ In September, the New Zealand Supreme Court upheld the quashing of a seabed mining application in the South Taranaki Bight. The applicant was granted a license by the Environmental Protection Authority in 2017 to mine 50 million tons of seabed per year for 35 years from a 65 km² area, 20 km from shore. Like two other applications, this attracted broad spectrum opposition from communities, Indigenous groups, NGOs, the fishing industry and recreational ocean users.
- ✓ In Spain, MP Néstor Rego tabled a parliamentary resolution and written in October, on the strength of Spain’s “yes” vote on Motion 069 at the IUCN World Conservation Congress. Versions of the resolution were also adapted to be tabled at regional parliaments including Galicia, Asturias and the Canary Islands. The parliament of the Canary Islands has called for a moratorium on DSM in international waters until the effects on the marine environment have been studied.
- ✓ The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States expressed concern over the triggering of the two-year rule by Nauru and the rush to adopt regulations in an October letter led by Costa Rica and signed by 10 member countries.

- ✓ Greenpeace spearheaded a [petition](#) to ban DSM in New Zealand. It collected 30,000+ signatures and was delivered to the new incoming Minister in November.
- ✓ Europe's Long Distance, Pelagic and Northwestern Waters (fisheries) Advisory Councils released [new, detailed advice](#) in November calling for a moratorium on DSM.
- ✓ Several major NGOs, Norway's largest fishing industry association and the Institute of Marine Research in Bergen, have all made submissions expressing concern over the Norwegian government's DSM plans. A stakeholder consultation organized by the government generated strong statements of opposition by civil society and scientists.

The DSCC had planned to participate in a series of international meetings and events in 2021. Most either took on a virtual format or were postponed until 2022. Of note, both the meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) were postponed from 2020 to 2021. At the SBSTTA meeting in May-June, we worked with members on recommendations for amendments to be included in the draft Decision on marine and coastal biodiversity calling on States to ensure that DSM does not result in loss of biodiversity and degradation of the marine environment.

Our colleagues at the High Seas Alliance are focused on advocacy toward the strongest possible implementing agreement for global ocean governance in areas beyond national jurisdiction, working with governments to assess the opportunities and trade-offs required. We are guided by their expertise on the treaty negotiations relating to the deep ocean.

2.2. International Seabed Authority

We developed a DSCC submission on the third draft of the Standards and Guidelines, released in April. A critical cover letter added this chapeau to the submission:

...the DSCC believes that this process of negotiating the Standards and Guidelines is deeply flawed. Our comments and input below should in no way be regarded as an endorsement or legitimization of the process. The DSCC and all of its 90+ member organizations call for a moratorium on deep-sea mining to be put in place unless and until a set of conditions is met as set out in the [DSCC position statement on deep-sea mining](#).

On 29 June, the Pacific Island of Nauru [triggered a rule](#) which obligates the ISA to either adopt mining regulations by July 2023. If the regulations have not been adopted by then, the ISA must give the company a license to mine under 'provisional' regulations.

Despite [concerns](#) from civil society organizations, including the DSCC, for the ISA to hold the December Council and Assembly meetings in person, the meetings proceeded. They concluded with an agreement to an enhanced schedule of meetings and program of work in 2022, toward the adoption of mining regulations by 2023.

2.3. Public Outreach

The DSCC continued to increase our visibility as an authority on threats to deep-sea biodiversity. We focused most of our campaign energies on the moratorium push, resulting in a significant amplification of the messaging around DSM.

We supported WWF in developing a [manifesto for endorsement by companies](#) from a variety of sectors to publicly support a moratorium on DSM. The DSCC adopted the unbranded business statement as a tool for our own corporate outreach.

We ramped up industry engagement through [#DefendTheDeep](#), a pre-divestment campaign, which [gained momentum and high profile support across our target groups](#). Google, Philips, Microsoft, and Samsung in the technology and communications sectors; BMW, Volkswagen, Renault, Rivian and Volvo Group in the automotive industry; and ABN AMRO, Garanti BBVA and Lloyds Bank in the finance sector are among the global names who committed to 'pre-divest'. Outdoor clothing company, Patagonia, also joined the growing list.

We worked with scientists from the Benioff Ocean Initiative to draft and circulate a [letter from ocean scientists and policy experts calling for a 'precautionary pause' on DSM](#), which has been signed by over 600 marine science and policy experts from 44 countries.

Toward countering the narrative that deep seabed minerals are required in the batteries needed for the 'green energy revolution', in February, Amnesty International launched a set of [principles for ensuring that batteries are not linked to human rights abuses or environmental harm](#). Reports such as "[A Material Transition](#)" by War on Want released in March and "[Clean Energy must not Rely on Dirty Mining](#)" by Earthworks released in April contribute to the dialogue around what a sustainable future should look like. They help insert the deep ocean into what has been a largely terrestrial discussion.

Numerous podcasts and interviews throughout the year featured DSCC voices (e.g. [Catch Our Drift](#)). [Bloomberg](#) and the [Wall Street Journal](#) ran hard hitting articles in June, challenging the narrative promoted by DSM industry leaders and their relationship with the ISA. With the increased campaign activity, the DSCC's profile shot up across social media. Throughout 2021, the DSCC's audience grew by + 21.8% on Facebook and +28.4% on Twitter. Posts from the DSCC's accounts across Twitter and Facebook had 642,835 impressions and an average engagement rate of 2.3% with 14,719 interactions with posts from DSCC accounts.

3. Accounts and Operations

3.1. Governance

The core team involved in delivering the DSCC's overall program of work is a Director, a Political/Policy Advisor, a Legal/Policy Advisor, an Assistant Coordinator and an Advocacy Program

Officer. Additionally, the DSM Moratorium campaign has a dedicated campaigner and is coordinated at the regional level by colleagues in Europe and the Pacific, as well as through member organization AIDA in Latin America. The Seamounts campaign has dedicated coordination and communications resources in New Zealand. All of these are part-time positions, working closely together and with colleagues from several DSCC member organizations.

We have a Board of Directors and a Steering Group that advises the Board, comprising five people from the most active member organizations, core team members, and our strategic communications advisor. Board members participate in key Steering Group discussions in an *ex officio* role. This structure has served the Coalition well to date, keeping administrative costs to a minimum and enabling a nimble, fleet-footed approach to shifting strategic opportunities at the national, regional and global levels.

In the coming 24 months we will consolidate the organization and management of the team, which has grown rapidly, and seek to bring in additional resources to better coordinate global delivery of each of the two campaigns. Our further aim is to effectively mobilize in-kind support within relevant DSCC member organizations and across new potential partners.

Today, more than 90 organizations worldwide work together under the umbrella of the DSCC. Most are active in either the deep-sea fisheries or DSM space, or both. We will continue to work closely with active members to develop and align on advocacy strategies and communications, and ensure broad and appropriate representation at the various relevant meetings.

We will continue to seek new partners among the wider community of NGOs working both on marine biodiversity and mining issues more broadly. Additionally, we aim to broaden our engagement with groups working more in the systems change and sustainable consumption and production space, as well as the tech and renewables energy and finance sectors, particularly with respect to the assumptions being made about future demand for minerals as a driver of the need to mine the deep sea.

3.2. Financial Report

The DSCC's accounts are held across three entities - our foundations in the Netherlands and New Zealand, and with the Marine Conservation Institute in the USA. Accountancy services in the Netherlands were performed by Counting for the Future and the audit was conducted by Boonzaaijer & Merkus Accountants & Adviseurs. Member organization Marine Conservation Institute provided the fiscal administration for our US-based grants.

Figure 1. Annual Accounts, Stichting Deep Sea Conservation Coalition – Netherlands holdings

Balance sheet		Statement of Operations	
As of December 31st 2021 (in euros)		Year end 31 December 2021 (in euros)	
ASSETS		PROJECT REVENUE	
<i>Current</i>		Fisheries	148,808
Cash & Cash equivalents	960,885	Seabed Mining	952,864
Prepays	696	Total Project Revenue	1,101,672
Total Assets	961,581	PROJECT EXPENSES	
LIABILITIES		Administration	56,718
<i>Short term</i>		Advocacy	444,143
Payables	117,356	Communication	328,755
Accrued expenses	127,362	Coordination	123,547
Deferred project revenue	716,863	Science	4,700
Total Liabilities	961,581	Additional consultants	143,809
		Total project expenses	1,101,672

Figure 2. Annual Accounts, Deep Sea Conservation Coalition – New Zealand holdings

Statement of Operations		
Year end 31 December 2021		
	NZD	EUR
PROJECT REVENUE		
Grants	-	-
PROJECT EXPENSES		
Administration	4,115	2,482
Advocacy	-	-
Communication	-	14,812
Coordination	-	34,912
Additional consultants	-	21,067
Total project expenses	4,115	355,787

Figure 3. Annual Accounts, Deep Sea Conservation Coalition – US holdings

Statement of Operations		
Year end 31 December 2021		
	USD	EUR
PROJECT REVENUE		
Grants	555,977	491,841
PROJECT EXPENSES		
Administration	2,513	2,223
Advocacy	319,647	282,773
Communication	16,744	14,812
Coordination	39,464	34,912
Additional consultants	23,814	21,067
Total project expenses	402,182	355,787

Sincerely,



Lance Morgan, PhD
 Chair of the Board of Directors
 Deep Sea Conservation Coalition