



## Compliance Information Sheet

# Benthic protection areas and seamount closures

The Ministry of Fisheries Field Operations group has developed an operating model that emphasises the concept of “informed and assisted” compliance to support the principles of enforcement. In practical terms this means that, where possible, the Ministry of Fisheries will bring to the attention of industry matters that are of direct interest and concern to the Ministry.

The purpose of this information sheet is to remind fishing vessel operators of the method restrictions that apply to benthic protection areas and certain seamounts.

As a responsible operator it is vital that you are aware of the restrictions. The Ministry expects 100 percent compliance with the relevant legislation and will take appropriate action where a breach of the legislation is detected.

### Benthic protection areas

In April 2007, in response to a fishing industry proposal, the Government closed 17 separate areas within New Zealand’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ) to dredging and placed tight restrictions on trawling in those areas. The intention of the restrictions is to prohibit bottom trawling but to allow for midwater trawling to take place providing it is closely monitored.

The key restrictions on trawling in the benthic protection areas (BPAs) include the following:

- The Fisheries Communication Centre must be notified prior to a vessel entering a BPA for the purpose of trawling.
- A vessel that has entered a BPA for the purpose of trawling must have two observers on board and use an automatic location communicator (ALC).
- A vessel that has entered a BPA for the purpose of trawling must carry an electronic net monitoring system capable of continuously recording as a minimum:
  - depth of groundrope and seabed
  - date and time
  - latitude and longitude.



- Trawling is prohibited within 100 metres of the seabed.

The standards and requirements that apply to the electronic net monitoring system referred above are contained in a circular that is available on the Ministry of Fisheries website at [www.fish.govt.nz](http://www.fish.govt.nz) (go to the Environmental tab, in the green column click on the link to Benthic Protection Areas, and click on the link to the circular).

Contact details for the Fisheries Communication Centre:

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## Seamount closures

In 2001 the Government prohibited trawling in 17 seamounts distributed throughout the EEZ. Within these areas all trawling is prohibited; there is no provision for midwater trawling.

Note that there is some overlap between BPAs and seamount closures with four seamount closures occurring within a BPA. In these cases the seamount closure provisions apply, with a prohibition on all trawling activity.

## Rationale for protection

The purpose of the BPA and seamount closures is to protect benthic (seafloor) biodiversity. Between them the areas cover over 30 percent of the EEZ and include:

- 28 percent of underwater topographic features (including seamounts)
- 52 percent of seamounts over 1,000 metres in height
- 88 percent of known active hydrothermal vents.

The area covered by the BPAs and seamount closures constitutes one of the largest protected areas in the world. It is important that the integrity of these areas is maintained and that fishers adhere to all relevant restrictions.

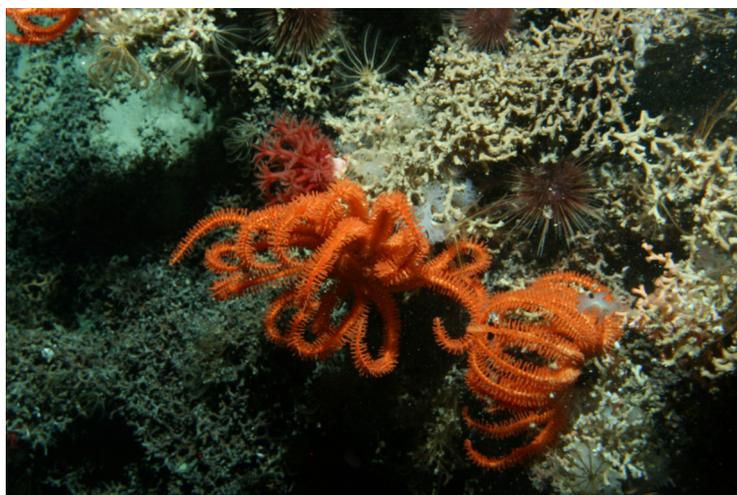
## Further information

Coordinates of the BPAs and seamount closures are available on the Ministry's NABIS website at [www.nabis.govt.nz](http://www.nabis.govt.nz) or, alternatively, by contacting a Fishery Officer.

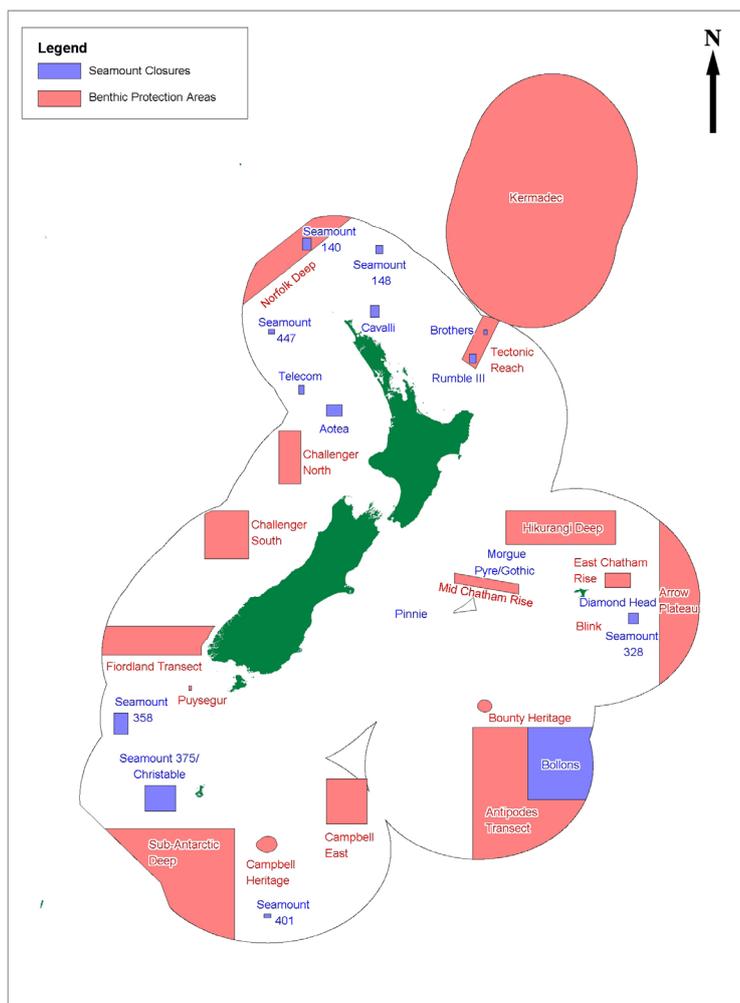


Andrew Coleman  
Acting Chief Executive

Photos: Credit NIWA



Locations of Benthic Protection Areas & Seamount Closures



## Disclaimer

Nothing in this information sheet should be read to preclude obligations for all current requirements. The purpose of this information sheet is to achieve informed and assisted compliance.