

# 'Everyone has a role to play': UBC students are protesting deep sea mining

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UBC students holding up a banner at a February 4 protest against deep sea mining. *Courtesy Jacob Power, @jpowerphotography*

UBC student activists and academic researchers are increasingly speaking out against the controversial issue of deep sea mining.

[Deep sea mining](#) is the process of extracting resources from the ocean floor below two hundred metres. Supporters of deep sea mining claim that it is one of the last measures

possible to extract resources necessary for industries and electronic infrastructure. Opponents argue that the environmental impacts of deep sea mining are too destructive.



[UBC students](#) involved in ocean activism used IMPAC5 — a marine conservation conference in Vancouver the first week of February — as the impetus for a large demonstration. The activists protested outside the headquarters of the Vancouver-based The Metals Company (TMC), which is an industry leader of deep sea mining exploration, on February 4.

Bodhi Patil, a second-year UBC student and ocean activist, helped organize the February demonstration.

“The most important component of the demonstration was the number of UBC students that showed up, many of which were friends, colleagues and allies across different UBC clubs,” he said.

Patil cited the UBC Surf Club as the most significant organizer of the protests, along with UBC Climate Justice, Sprouts, UBC Sustainability Hub, UBC Oceanography and Ocean Uprising. Patil is an executive of UBC Surf Club and a founder of Ocean Uprising.

“At the TMC headquarters we were able to tell TMC exactly why deep seabed mining is not just economically unfeasible, but it's politically and environmentally unfathomable and not just because it's at the deepest part of the ocean because it touches the deepest part of human ancestry,” Patil said.

Lukas Troni, a third-year geography student, heard about the February protest when Patil spoke to his ocean science class and has been interested in deep sea activism after listening to a podcast on deep sea mining in 2022.

“We wanted to just demonstrate to the Canadian government that there are people that really care about this cause,” Troni said about the protest.

Troni used to be involved in more direct action protests with environmental groups like Save Old Growth, but has recently seen demonstrations for policy change as more effective.

“It's all been moving really fast recently, and it's very exciting,” Troni said. “Now there's definitely a lot of hope, and there's definitely a lot of opportunities as well.”

Dr. Rashid Sumaila, a professor at UBC and researcher of deep sea mining economics, said he supports caution when considering deep sea mining. “We don't fully understand what the

effect of this will be on the very delicate life that is in the deep sea," Sumaila said.



Sumaila was awarded the [2023 Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement](#) jointly with UBC professor Dr. Daniel Pauly for their research and efforts to ban fishing on the high seas. As a specialist in the economics of the ocean economy, he is concerned about the impacts of deep sea mining.

“This activity is taking place in very sensitive parts of the ocean. The total economic consequences are not being considered.”

Sumaila pointed out that it is mostly developed countries with leading technological capabilities that benefit from deep sea mining, and even then private mining companies are often supported by public funds and tax money.

“You have to take into account the private benefits, the profits and so on, but you also have to look at what this activity will do to the larger society and the environment.” Sumaila said.

On February 9, [Canada declared a moratorium](#) on deep sea mining in domestic waters. This follows the lead of France, New Zealand and other nations in pausing deep sea mining exploration in domestic waters, but falls short of the demonstration’s demand for a complete ban of all deep sea mining in international waters.

Patil plans to continue in ocean activism, and said there is room for more UBC students to get involved.

“Everyone has a role to play in defending the deep sea — our common heritage site,” Patil said.

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