

UN confirms NZ's extended

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New Zealand's right to approximately 1.7 million square kilometres of extended continental shelf seabed has been confirmed by the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

The extended continental shelf is the shelf that extends beyond New Zealand's 200 nautical miles Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

It is in addition to the approx four million square kilometres of seabed in the New Zealand EEZ. The extended continental shelf is about six times New Zealand's total land area (about 270,000 square kilometres).

The New Zealand submission was the result of a 10-year, \$44m project involving technical, scientific, legal and policy input from a range of New Zealand government agencies.

These include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), Land Information New Zealand (LINZ), National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA), and Institute of Geological and Nuclear Science (GNS Science).

New Zealand lodged its submission with the UN Commission in 2006 in accordance with the procedures in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea [external link].

Over the past two years, a team of New Zealand officials (from MFAT and LINZ) and scientists (from NIWA and GNS Science) have met four times with a special sub-commission set up to consider the NZ submission.

New Zealand's team answered questions and provided further information on New Zealand's continental shelf.

The Commission issued its recommendations on 12 September (2008). It has endorsed more than 98 percent of New Zealand's original submission.



The black lines in this map shows New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), with the red indicating New Zealand's extended continental shelf beyond the EEZ. The grey lines indicates other states' EEZs, while the yellow lines mark the 2004 New Zealand-Australia maritime delimitation treaty.

- [Full recommendations of the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf - 12 September 2008 \(PDF 2.4MB\)](#)

New Zealand can now set the outer limits of its continental shelf on the basis of the Commission's recommendations, subject to agreeing maritime boundaries with Fiji, Tonga and possibly France (in respect of New Caledonia) to the north.

It's not yet known what natural resources might be on the extended New Zealand shelf. However, the process ensures New Zealand enjoys sovereign rights over them.

The New Zealand Government already earns more than \$100 million per annum in royalties and other income from the seabed within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Australia's extended continental shelf was confirmed by the UN Commission in April 2008, and is about the size of Western Australia – approx 2.5 million square kilometres.

- Information on the Continental Shelf Project in the "New Zealand Continental Shelf Report" published by Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) [more](#)
- Information on the scientific work involved in the preparation of the New Zealand submission [more](#)

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