



COMMUNICATION

Opening of the Norwegian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) for exploration and exploitation of marine mineral resources

Communication by the KDM Marine Mineral Resource Strategy Group

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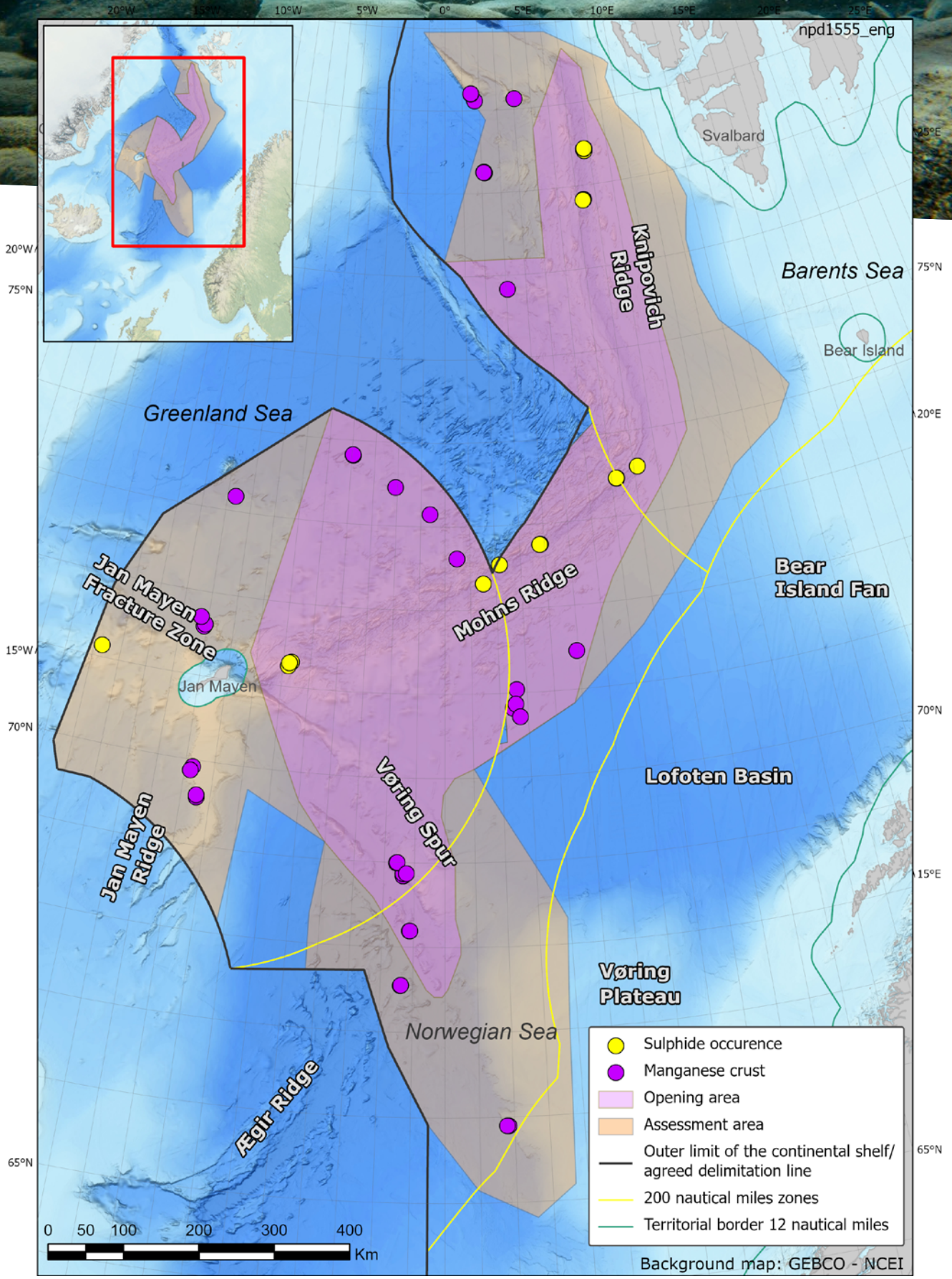
On 9 January 2024, the Norwegian Parliament voted in favour of opening a 281,200km² area within the Norwegian EEZ between Iceland and Svalbard for the exploration and possible future extraction of marine mineral resources (see figure). This approval was granted based on the work of the [Norwegian Offshore Directorate](#), several public hearings, and on the basis of a [White Paper](#) (available only in Norwegian) submitted to the Parliament by the Norwegian Government. In addition to resource assessments and environmental impact assessments, the White Paper also contains a strategy for the management of mineral resources on the seabed.

The targeted resources are polymetallic massive sulphides and polymetallic ferromanganese crusts, which are a potential source of copper, cobalt, nickel, zinc, manganese, gold, and silver as well as other trace metals. Manganese nodules do not occur in the Norwegian EEZ, or only in insignificant quantities, and are therefore not subject to exploration or possible mining.

In view of the sharp increase in demand of certain strategic metals due to the transition towards renewable energies and e-mobility, minerals from the deep sea can contribute to Europe's future supply of these

metals and, thus, help in reducing the dependency on the import of the above-mentioned metals from third countries (e.g. China, Russia). The Norwegian Ministry of Oil and Energy estimates that the resources of metals such as zinc, copper, cobalt and silver available in the Norwegian EEZ are equivalent to several years' global consumption.

The decision of the Norwegian Parliament will not automatically or necessarily lead to deep-sea mining. Instead, it introduces a comprehensive licensing system that provides for a step-by-step approach to the possible allocation of license blocks for the exploration and extraction of marine mineral resources. It relies heavily on Norwegian experience and legislation from the offshore oil and gas industry. It is technology-based and focuses on environmental management. The Norwegian Government has stated that extraction will only be approved if industry can demonstrate that mining is profitable and can be carried out in a responsible manner, thus ensuring environmental, shipping, and safety issues, and can coexist with other activities in the **targeted** area.



Proven sulphide and ferromanganese crust deposits in the Norwegian EEZ. The area for exploration is marked in purple. However, possible future mining would only affect a small fraction of the exploration area.

Source: Meldten-St. 25 (Reports to the Storting 2022–2023).