

Interest Grows In New Zealand's Large Offshore Basins

Interest in the offshore petroleum prospects, both coastal and deep water, around New Zealand continues to grow with many companies showing keen interest in the results of a large deep water Taranaki Basin seismic survey which was completed in August.

The speculative seismic survey, covering a 59,000 km² area to the northwest of New Plymouth over water depths from 500 m to 2000 m, will add substantially to knowledge of the deep water area closest to the productive Taranaki oil and gas fields. Presently, little is known of the area. However, a single seismic line for a continental shelf survey found sediments up to 8 km thick. This prompted the latest survey. Norwegian company, TGS NOPEC, and New Zealand's Institute of Geological and Nuclear Science joined forces to carry out the non-exclusive survey using the ship Polar Duke. TGS NOPEC will licence both the data and a GNS interpretive report to all interested parties.

Crown Minerals, which manages the New Zealand government's petroleum estate, plans to offer the area for exploration permitting in 2002.

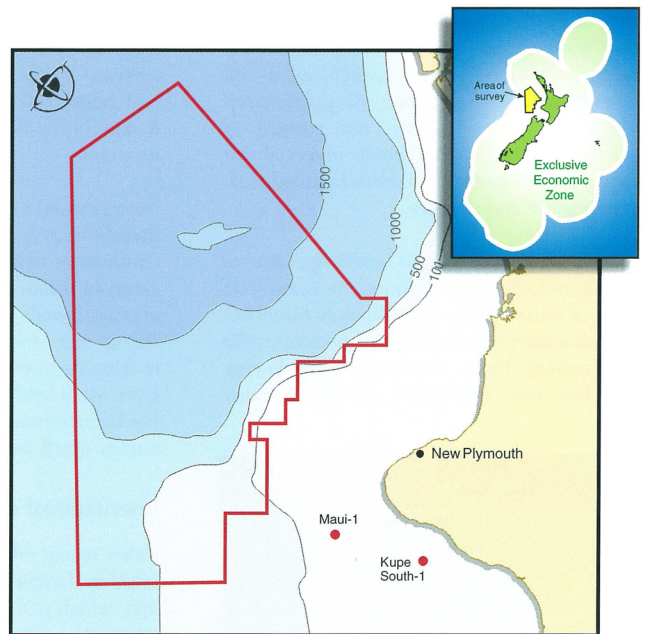
New Zealand offers a big potential for new exploration. Though a long, narrow country, the indented coastline is as long as that of continental USA.

Petroleum basins with proven petroleum systems cover about two thirds of the coast with most of the basins also coming onshore. The submerged continent of New Zealand is huge, over 10 times larger than the country's land area. In places the continental shelf extends hundreds of kilometres from the coast. Some of the deep water basins are little known by oceanographers, let-alone drilled by oilmen.

On the eastern coast of the North Island, in the offshore area of the East Coast Basin, there are some very large but untested structures. This area contains more than 140 structural closures over 20 km² in size, with 30 of these having the potential to hold over 100 MMbbl of oil or 5-15 Tcf of gas. Large areas of source rock are nearby.

Large potential structures have also been identified in the offshore Canterbury Basin

south of Christchurch, while part of the similarly prospective Great South Basin to the south of the South Island is now under permit.



Map of deep water Taranaki seismic survey.