

NZ's New Continental Shelf Rights Adds 42% To Offshore Exploration Estate

A United Nations commission has officially confirmed New Zealand's claim to an extended continental shelf (ECS) area that includes rights to resources such as petroleum and minerals beneath and on the sea floor.

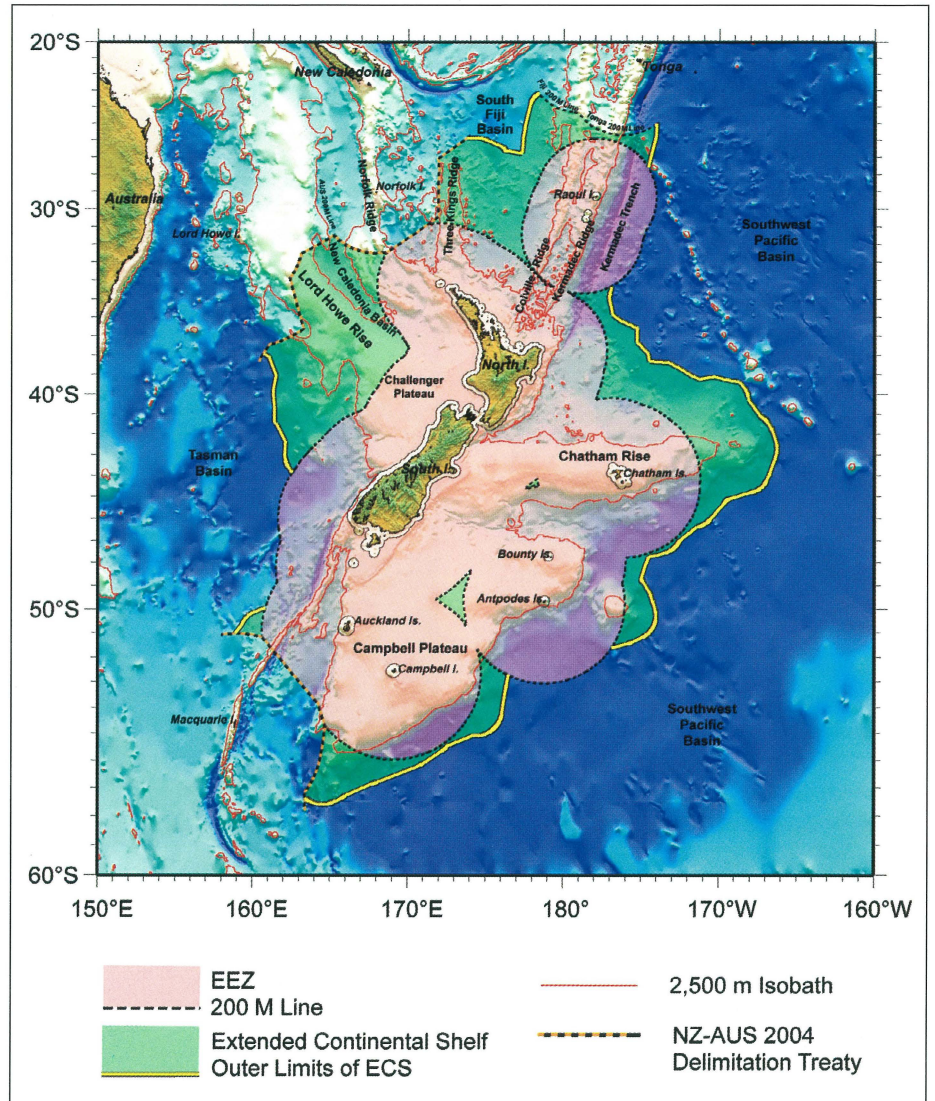
As a result the country's rights over the Continental Shelf sea floor around its coast have been officially extended by 1.7 MM km² or 42% greater than covered by the 200 nautical-mile-wide exclusive-economic zone (EEZ). Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) said the water column in the continental shelf extensions will continue to be regarded as in international waters, unlike the EEZ which covers both water and below seafloor.

The largest addition to New Zealand's continental shelf is to the west of the North Island, extending territory out from 800 km to 900 km west of New Plymouth. This western extension is greater than the New Zealand landmass itself and will bring some future potential petroleum basins under New Zealand control.

Two basins within New Zealand's new ECS are the Bellona and Monowai basins which are on the southwest side of the Challenger Plateau (now all inside New Zealand's EEZ and shelf areas). Crown Minerals is to begin work to understand these basins to announce blocks offers for exploration within the next five years.

The new western extension area also covers the remaining part of the deep-water Taranaki Basin not already inside the EEZ and a large part of the deep New Caledonia Basin.

Other shelf extensions are to the north towards Fiji and Tonga (where boundary negotiations are not completed), to the north (mainly east



This map shows the boundaries for New Zealand's extended continental shelf confirmed by the United Nations Commission. Boundary delimitation negotiations with Fiji and Tonga are still to be completed.

and northeast of Chatham Islands) and smaller extensions to the south of the Campbell Plateau (to approximately 1,000 km south of the South Island). The 1.7 MM km² shelf extension will

add to the 4 MM km² already within New Zealand's EEZ, giving a total offshore sea floor area of 5.7 MM km², or 21 times the size of New Zealand's land area of 268,021 km². ■