

Next 100 Coalition Opposes Proposed Seabed Mining Off Virginia's Coast

The proposal opens over 2,700 square miles of Atlantic waters, risking offshore landscapes of extraordinary ecological, historical, and cultural significance.

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, July 21, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Next 100 Coalition today announced its opposition to the U.S. Department of the Interior's [proposal](#) to consider commercial seabed mining off Virginia's Eastern Shore. The proposal would open more than 2,700 square miles of Atlantic waters to a new and largely untested industrial activity, placing at risk an offshore landscape of extraordinary ecological, historical, and cultural significance.



Alongside serious concerns about the impacts of seabed mining on marine habitats, fisheries, migratory wildlife, and coastal communities, the proposal also threatens a coastal landscape shaped by thousands of years of Indigenous history, maritime traditions, colonization, slavery, military service, and scientific discovery. Much of that heritage remains beneath the water in shipwrecks, submerged landscapes, and archaeological sites that have yet to be understood or documented. Disturbing the seafloor at an industrial scale, with a limited understanding of the impacts, risks damaging both living ecosystems and irreplaceable cultural resources forever.

Karyn Bigelow, Programs & Advocacy Director for the Next 100 Coalition, issued the following statement:

"The maritime landscape off Virginia's coast is both a living ecosystem and a living archive. Long before European ships reached these shores, Indigenous communities lived, traveled, traded, fished, and stewarded these coasts and waters. The same Atlantic carried African men, women and children stolen from their homelands into Virginia and into a system of slavery that helped

build and shape the nation. Laborers, sailors, fishermen, pilots, shipbuilders, oyster workers, and coastal families, many from Black communities, helped build the maritime culture and economy that still define this coast. This history remains visible in working waterfronts and coastal traditions. However much of it lies beneath the water in shipwrecks, submerged landscapes and ecosystems, and archaeological sites that have not yet been fully studied. Once the seafloor is disturbed, we risk damaging the natural systems that sustain life while losing an irreplaceable record of the people, cultures, and histories connected to these waters.”

The Next 100 Coalition urges the Department of the Interior to reject commercial seabed mining off Virginia's coast and protect the shared natural and cultural heritage that has sustained people, wildlife, and communities for thousands of years. Members of the public should submit comments on the proposal by July 23, 2026.

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About Next 100 Coalition

The Next 100 Coalition is an intersectional partnership harnessing our collective power to collaborate, invest in leadership, and bridge strategies for thriving, healthy, nature-grounded communities for the next 100 years and beyond. For more information on the Next 100 Coalition, please visit next100coalition.org.

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