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Diving into Deep Sea Mining: Balancing the Need for Metals with Environmental Protection

Renewable power requires precious metals. Electric car batteries, wind turbines, solar installations, and cell phone batteries are just a few of the modern technologies that use metals such as cobalt, copper, and nickel. Existing land mining operations for these metals are concentrated in a few locations, some of which are known for political instability. These issues have led some to consider an unlikely source for metals—the ocean floor. However, the deep ocean and ocean floor remain the largest unexplored place on Earth. More people have traveled to outer space than have traveled to the deepest depths of the ocean. Mining the ocean floor presents an opportunity for tremendous growth and discovery, but the potential environmental impacts are uncertain.

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