

Pacific Ocean floor to be explored

July 17 2006

Scientists prepared Monday to explore the seafloor near Papua New Guinea in the western Pacific Ocean with remotely operated underwater vehicles.

The researchers will investigate active and inactive hydrothermal vents and the formation of mineral deposits containing copper, gold and other commercially valuable minerals.

The project is a joint expedition of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution of Woods Hole, Mass., and Nautilus Minerals Inc. of Vancouver, British Columbia.

The expedition includes a 32-day WHOI research program funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation to the Pacmanus vent sites in the Eastern Manus Basin. Nautilus will fund an additional 10-day program to explore and sample the Vienna Woods sulfide prospects on the Manus Ridge, northwest of the Pacmanus study area.

WHOI Geophysicist Maurice Tivey will head the 42-day expedition, which begins Friday aboard the research vessel Melville, operated by the Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

Tivey and other WHOI scientists and students will be joined by colleagues from universities and scientific institutions in the United States, Germany, South Korea, Australia and Papua New Guinea.

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Citation: Pacific Ocean floor to be explored (2006, July 17) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2006-07-pacific-ocean-floor-explored.html>

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