

THE CONGO MARINE PROGRAM

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES AND PROTECTION OF MARINE BIODIVERSITY



Fig. 1: Pantropical spotted dolphins (*Stenella attenuata*), and many other species occurring off the Congo coast are affected by severe overfishing; habitat alteration; fisheries by-catch; oil pollution; and expanding coastal development. Photo: Tim Collins/WCS

The Republic of Congo's coastal and offshore waters represent a key transition area between the warmer, more turbid Gulf of Guinea and the cooler waters of southern Africa, making for some of the most productive fishing zones in the world. Threatened nesting sea turtles rely on the country's beaches, and its coastal waters are important habitat for many cetaceans, including migrating humpback whales, Brydes and sperm whales, and Critically Endangered Atlantic humpback dolphins. The Congo Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) contributes significantly to food security and poverty alleviation in fisheries-dependent coastal communities, but, like fishing grounds the world over, this zone is also highly vulnerable to Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) exploitation. To tackle this issue WCS Congo, together with the Congolese Government and other partners, has initiated a broad marine conservation program aimed at strengthening and increasing Marine Protected Areas (MPA) as well as ensuring the sustainable management of marine resources.

**2,047,500,000
FRANC CFA**

would have been generated since 2006
if vessels had been fined the minimum
penalty for infractions of fisheries laws

THE CONGO MARINE PROGRAM'S THREE PILLARS

1. MPAs (MARINE PROTECTED AREAS)

Creation of a network of
MPAs via the expansion of
existing MPAs and the
designation of new MPAs

2. INTEGRATED MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING

Development of a spatial
planning tool based on
scientific data to support
global maritime reforms

3. CAPACITY BUILDING

Strengthening capacity of
stakeholders to ensure
surveillance, law-
enforcement & improved
fisheries management.



Fig. 2: Map showing the location of the Congo Marine project.

PROGRESS TO DATE

Since the conception of the WCS Marine Program, the Congolese Ministry of Forestry Economy and the Ministry of Fisheries have been key players and have strongly supported the launch of the Program while supporting efforts to strengthen institutional capacity. The last two years of stakeholder consultations culminated in a multi-sectorial and ministerial workshop in April 2017 in Pointe Noire, to formally launch the project.

The last two years of stakeholder consultations culminated in a multi-sectorial and ministerial workshop to formally launch the project in April 2017 in Pointe Noire. WCS and partners have collected significant scientific data over the last two years to ensure that strategic and management decisions are informed, including the design of the marine spatial strategy. Spatial and Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) analysis carried out since 2015 have revealed that the spatial footprint of the industrial fisheries sector impacts 22.3% of Congo's EEZ (8,189 km²), of which 12% lies within Conkouati-Douli National Park and 14% within the artisanal fisheries zone. Socioeconomic surveys indicated that 96% of individuals had observed industrial fishing within the artisanal fisheries zone.

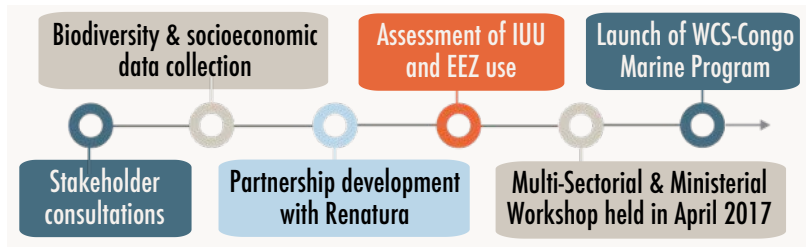
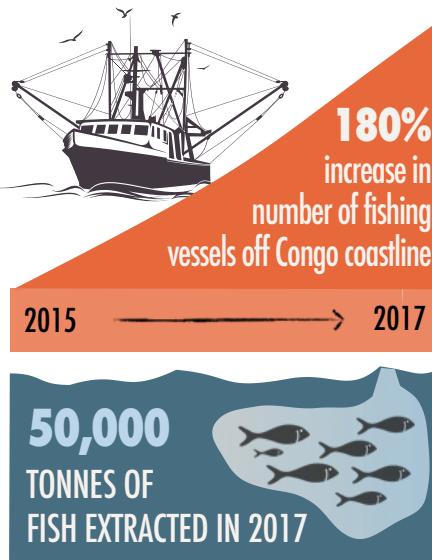
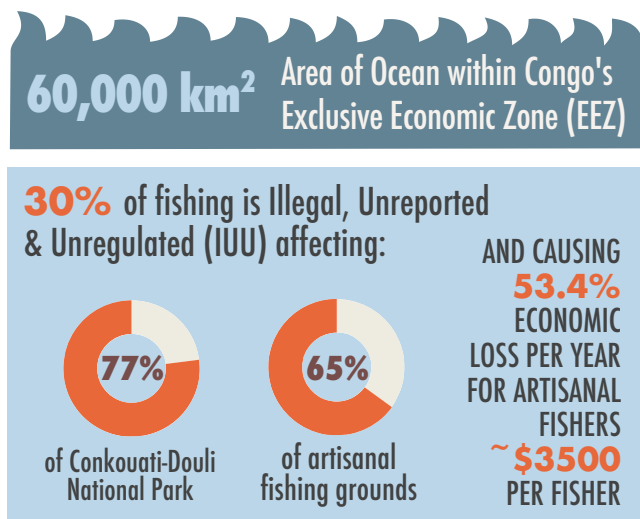


Fig. 3: Of the 54 fishing vessels controlled in 2017 49 were found to be fishing illegally. Socio-economic surveys showed that 55% of local, artisanal fishers suffered from gear loss associated with IUU fishing.

CONGO'S COASTLINE IN NUMBERS



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INTRODUCING OUR PARTNERS

Renatura is a Congo-based NGO which promotes sustainable development through biodiversity conservation and outreach activities. Key projects include a marine turtle nesting site beach monitoring program, participatory by-catch monitoring in small-scale fishing communities, education and outreach delivered to 19,000 children to date, and support of law enforcement activities against IUU. Renatura and WCS have a long-standing working partnership to support the implementation of the Congo Marine Program.

The University of Exeter (UoE) is our scientific partner on marine biodiversity conservation in Central Africa. For the Congo Marine Program, UoE provides support for data collection and analysis, technical training and capacity building covering aspects of ecosystem-based management, spatial planning, social science research methodologies, community engagement, fisheries enforcement and monitoring. Their scientific skills are a strong asset in supporting the Government of Congo in the conception of the country's national marine spatial strategy.

NEXT STEPS

In 2018, the Congo Marine Program will focus on several key activities:

- Extend the Conkouati-Douli National Park area and support the creation of the Loango Bai Marine Protected Area.
- Strengthen the capacity of the local administrative offices for the sustainable management of marine resources including surveillance and law-enforcement
- Increase marine surveillance efforts in collaboration with the Pointe Noire Fishery Directorate and the NGO Renatura
- Develop the needed databases to monitor and evaluate the EEZ's use and management in a transparent manner
- Develop a Congo Marine Spatial Plan and Strategy