

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - FAQ

1. What is the Rio Doce Panel?

The Rio Doce Panel (RDP) is an IUCN-led [Independent, Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel \(ISTAP\)](#) established with the critical purpose of advising on recovery efforts following the collapse of the Fundão tailings dam at Samarco's iron ore mining site in the State of Minas Gerais in 2015. The RDP comprises national and international experts with diverse technical skills, academic qualifications and local knowledge who provide technical recommendations directed mainly at the [Renova Foundation](#), the organisation in charge of implementing repair and compensation programmes in the Rio Doce basin.

The Rio Doce Panel was initially established for a period of five years, starting in mid-2017, and subscribes to the four principles of IUCN-ISTAPs - namely:

Independence: The Panel should be established and operate free from any external influence (from the government, private sector, NGOs, scientists or the IUCN). Collectively, Panel members are free to reach whatever they consider being the most robust and feasible conclusions and recommendations based on the best science available.

Transparency: The Panel's working arrangements, conclusions and recommendations should be made openly accessible and unaltered.

Accountability: The Panel should have a clear sense of purpose, deliver high-quality outputs and operate in a way that is consistent with IUCN's policies and procedures.

Engagement: The Panel should work with all affected parties during its entire lifetime. That includes recruiting Panel members willing to take evidence from a diversity of disciplines and perspectives and implementing a clear stakeholder engagement plan as part of its activities.

2. What and how are the challenges being addressed in the Rio Doce Basin?

On November 5, 2015, Samarco's Fundão tailings dam collapsed, containing approximately 55 million m³ of tailings. As a result, 39 million m³ of tailings spilt out of Samarco's site, destroying towns and impacting different ecosystems, including aquatic and terrestrial fauna, vegetation and agricultural land. Sadly, 19 people lost their lives in the incident, including 14 Samarco employees/contractors, four residents and one visitor to the Bento Rodrigues community.

The tailings spill caused extensive damage to the natural environment, communities and associated infrastructure along the Rio Doce and adjacent coastal zone. The disaster affected

much of the Rio Doce watershed and caused severe environmental and socio-economic problems, devastating people's livelihoods and disrupting the economy and development in the region.

These consequences were addressed in a legal Agreement between the companies involved - [Vale](#), [BHP](#) and [Samarco](#) (a joint venture of both companies) and the Brazilian government - called [Transaction and Conduct Adjustment Term \(TTAC\)](#). The TTAC describes 42 programmes designed with recovery, mitigation, remediation and repair actions for those directly and indirectly impacted. The programmes are implemented by the Renova Foundation, following the timetable and guidelines set in the Agreement.

3. What has been IUCN's experience with other large-scale cases and environmental restoration initiatives? (PUBLIC)

For more than ten years, IUCN has gathered considerable experience in using ISTAPs to resolve critical issues in partnership with companies and develop a set of practical models for delivering advice. The ISTAP model employed by IUCN in similarly challenging situations has positively contributed to effective environmental outcomes through sound science and collaboration. See other examples below:

- [The Niger Delta Panel](#) was created in 2012 in response to a request from the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Ltd. (SPDC) to provide science-based recommendations for the remediation and rehabilitation of biodiversity and habitats at oil spill sites in the Niger Delta. Their work concluded in 2016.
- [The Western Grey Whale Advisory Panel](#) (WGWAP) was established in 2004 at the request of the oil and gas company Sakhalin Energy. It aimed to provide independent scientific advice and recommendations on how the company can minimise risks associated with its operations with grey whales and their habitat in the area near the Sakhalin Islands – a region with large offshore oil and gas deposits and active exploitation of other natural resources.

[Learn more about ISTAPs](#)

4. What are the objectives and approach of the Rio Doce Panel?

The overall goal of the Rio Doce Panel is to provide the Renova Foundation with objective, independent and technical advice on the recovery of the Rio Doce Basin following the Fundão Dam failure of November 5, 2015.

RDP works with an approach that focuses on the following:

- Integrated and long-term strategy
- Landscape-scale perspective
- Nature-based solutions

5. What has the Panel accomplished so far?

The Rio Doce Panel has been working since 2017 and delivers its recommendations through two types of knowledge products:

- Thematic Reports: in-depth research papers about gaps and opportunities that can address critical questions on a landscape scale; and
- Issue Papers: short papers with timely recommendations on more specific topics.

All publications follow the IUCN Publishing Guidelines, and the documents go through anonymous peer review by experts worldwide. All Panel members are credited as authors of the Panel's publications and must agree on the content.

All publications are publicly available and can be accessed here: <https://www.iucn.org/rio-doce-panel/recommendations>

6. How does the Panel monitor the implementation of the recommendations?

The Rio Doce Panel (RDP) is supported by a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) strategy led by IUCN that, beyond tracking the progress of the project against planned activities, aims to capture how the knowledge produced and the recommendations issued by the Panel influence the restoration process in the region. While some monitoring tools focus on RDP internal processes, such as the delivery of products against annual work plans, others seek to understand how stakeholders internalise knowledge and implement the recommendations done by the Panel.

One of the tools to assess the uptake of RDP recommendations is the official feedback provided by Renova Foundation, informing how the Foundation intends to act regarding each recommendation received. An in-depth meeting among Panel members and Renova's technical teams takes place after each knowledge product's publication to discuss the recommendations, possibilities, and challenges for their implementation. After that, Renova issues its feedback. All Recommendations and public feedback are available here: <https://www.iucn.org/table/rio-doce-panel/recommendations>

7. How to follow the work of the Panel?

The annual work plan approved by the Project Board (composed of IUCN and Renova Foundation representatives) comprises a roadmap of publications, as well as attendance at events and periodic meetings. All Panel activities can be followed through the reports of face-to-face and virtual meetings available at <https://www.iucn.org/rio-doce-panel/panel/rio-doce-panel-meeting-documents>. Newsletters are issued with regular updates of RDP's work.

To follow the work of RDP, please subscribe to the newsletter here: <https://www.iucn.org/rio-doce-panel/panel/newsletter> or follow the official channels on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

8. How does the Panel decide on the topics of the papers?

The RDP decides on priority topics to work on based on information derived from stakeholders, internal meetings, state-of-the-art knowledge and national and international examples, among other sources. Pre-selected priority topics are then assessed according to the indicators below. However, the first four questions are mandatory for an issue to be addressed by the Panel:

- 1. Does the Panel have the expertise and capacity to lead the elaboration of the product?**
- 2. Does the Panel have enough clarity about what will be the final product?**
- 3. Is there publicly available technical and scientific information about the issue/theme to support the product construction?**
- 4. Does the issue/theme align with the RDP's Terms of Reference and Scope?**
5. Does the issue/theme address long-term, comprehensive basin solutions?
6. Does the issue/theme directly contribute to improving social and environmental health and resilience?
7. Can the RDP address the issue/theme and deliver the product in time for stakeholders to act upon the recommendations?
8. Will responding to the issue/theme contribute to conflict management?

9. Was the issue/theme suggested or mentioned by Renova or other stakeholders?

10. Does responding to the issue/theme helps set the Rio Doce as a sustainable development model for other basins?

9. What are the roles of the IUCN Secretariat, Members, and Commissions in the ISTAP process?

There are different roles and responsibilities within IUCN, as outlined in the [Procedures for Establishing and Managing ISTAPs](#):

IUCN's Secretariat plays facilitation and operational management role in the ISTAP process. It acts as a strong and effective "firewall" between the Panel and the contracting party/recipient of the advice.

The IUCN Director General reserves the sole authority to appoint, modify and dissolve IUCN-supported ISTAPs.

Chairs of IUCN's Commissions support the DG in considering the case for forming an ISTAP - particularly concerning the state of scientific or technical knowledge available on the issue at hand - and in identifying suitable candidates for Panel Chair positions.

IUCN Members in the focus country/region are consulted before a Panel is formed. Acceptance by IUCN Members is a key determinant in IUCN's decision on whether to proceed.

The IUCN Brazil Country Office handles technical support and project management for the Rio Doce Panel; overall coordination is under the responsibility of the Global Business and Biodiversity team; the Director of Nature-Based Solutions provides supervisory oversight. The IUCN Director General also has a seat on the RDP Project Board.

10. What is the relationship between the Rio Doce Panel and the different stakeholders?

Following the principles of ISTAPs, Panel members try to listen to all relevant stakeholders and are willing to consider and review evidence from a wide range of disciplines and perspectives. Understanding the interests of affected stakeholders is integral to the ISTAP process.

The Panel understands the importance of stakeholder engagement in the restoration process. It sets up face-to-face meetings with local leaders during site visits to discuss the issues to address in upcoming reports.

11. How are Rio Doce Panel members selected, and who is currently on the Panel?

All Panel members undergo a competitive and worldwide application process covering the skills and thematic areas in the Panel's [Terms of Reference](#).

Learn more about the Panel members here: <https://www.iucn.org/rio-doce-panel/panel>

12. How does the Panel's current work relate to other (similar) disasters?

Like the Renova Foundation, the Rio Doce Panel works exclusively on issues related to the Fundão Dam failure and its impacts on the Rio Doce Basin. However, after nearly four years of work and based on a wealth of information, the Rio Doce Panel reports are sources of experience and lessons learned about the mitigation process involving all stakeholders. The recommendations are designed so that they may be implemented beyond the Rio Doce basin to help in similar disasters, both within the country and abroad.

13. How can the Panel's contributions help the Rio Doce basin recover?

The recommendations provided by the Panel address the need to restore the basin based on the options and approaches that will secure the region's best possible environmental and social outcomes in the medium-to-long term.

Additionally, science-based evidence and data, reports and examples demonstrating best practices can raise awareness among regulators and decision-makers worldwide. In the case of the Rio Doce Panel, the independent recommendations might enhance collaboration among the region's stakeholders, including local communities, government, industry, the finance sector and civil society. These results might also help advance the project and inform local, regional and global IUCN Members and Commissions about their respective endeavours.

The benefits of the ISTAP approach must also be considered, as they range from fostering a deeper understanding of the issues among the stakeholders to the successful adoption of new biodiversity measures and practices. An important aspect of the Panel's work is to bring an integrated and long-term perspective to the restoration of the basin.

14. How does the Rio Doce Panel's work differ from other analyses and studies conducted in the basin?

The Panel contributes by providing the Renova Foundation with objective, independent, scientific and technical advice. Its work is based on an integrated and long-term approach, using a landscape-scale perspective and focusing on nature-based solutions, as approached in the [Thematic Report 01](#). Finally, the diverse technical skills, academic qualifications and local knowledge of its IUCN-selected international and national experts reinforce the Panel's uniqueness and robustness. They can bring greater clarity and transparency to a challenging issue.

15. What are the information sources used in the Panel's reports?

To provide transparent conclusions and recommendations, RDP will draw preferentially on peer-reviewed and leading national and international scientific journals and other publicly available sources (technical reports, media articles and websites) for contextualisation or access firsthand information that will support the elaboration of timely recommendations. The RDP also collects its evidence through field visits and meetings with stakeholders.

Hence, analysis and recommendations are based on publicly available data and studies and all Panel's conclusions are made public after a peer-review process that follows usual science practice.

About IUCN

IUCN is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations. It provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development and nature conservation to take place together.

Created in 1948, IUCN has evolved into the world's largest and most diverse environmental network. It harnesses the experience, resources, and reaches of its more than 1,300 Member organisations and the input of some 10,000 experts. IUCN is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it. Our experts are organised into six commissions dedicated to species survival, environmental law, protected areas, social and economic policy, ecosystem management and education and communication.

The ability to convene diverse stakeholders and provide the latest science, objective recommendations and on-the-ground expertise drives IUCN's mission of informing and empowering conservation efforts worldwide. We provide a neutral forum in which governments, NGOs, scientists, businesses, local communities, indigenous peoples groups, faith-based organisations and others can work together to forge and implement solutions to environmental challenges.

By facilitating these solutions, IUCN provides governments and institutions at all levels with the impetus to achieve universal goals, including on biodiversity, climate change and sustainable development, which IUCN was instrumental in defining.

Combined, our knowledge base and diverse membership make IUCN an incubator and trusted repository of best practices, conservation tools and international guidelines and standards. As the only environmental organisation with official United Nations Observer Status, IUCN ensures that nature conservation has a voice at the highest level of international governance.

IUCN's expertise and extensive network provide a solid foundation for a large and diverse portfolio of conservation projects around the world. Combining the latest science with the traditional knowledge of local communities, these projects work to reverse habitat loss, restore ecosystems and improve people's well-being. They also produce a wealth of data and information which feeds into IUCN's analytical capacity.

Through their affiliation with IUCN, Member organisations are part of a democratic process, voting Resolutions which drive the global conservation agenda. They meet every four years at the IUCN World Conservation Congress to set priorities and agree on the Union's work programme. IUCN congresses have produced several key international environmental agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the World Heritage Convention and the Ramsar Convention on



wetlands. We continue to help these conventions strengthen and evolve so that they can respond to emerging challenges.

Our Member organisations are represented by the IUCN Council – the governing body. Headquartered in Switzerland, the IUCN Secretariat comprises around 900 staff in over 160 countries.

In Brazil, through its Country Office, IUCN works together with the South American and Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean Regional Offices to implement projects related to Protected Areas and Indigenous People. The Rio Doce Panel is also managed by the Brazil Country Office, in coordination with IUCN HQ.