IUCN

RIO DOCE PANEL

INDEPENDENT SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY PANEL

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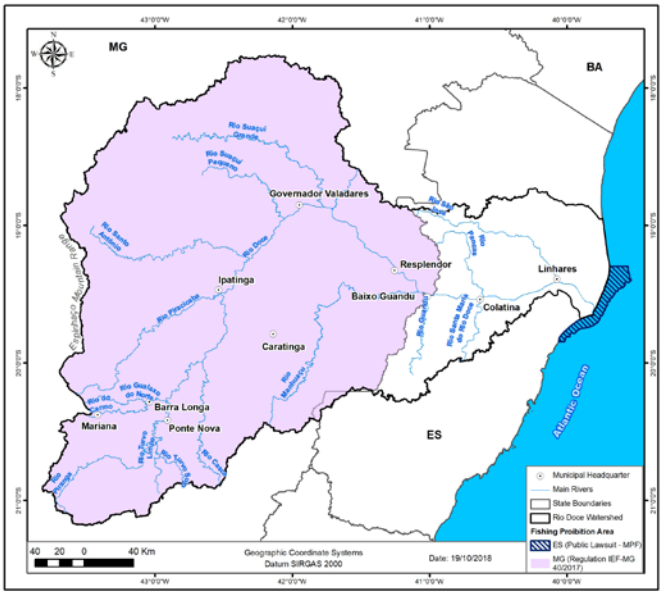
THE FISHING BAN AFTER THE FUNDÃO DAM FAILURE

USING THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE TO RESTORE FISHERIES IN THE RIO DOCE BASIN

A few months after the Fundão Dam failure in November 2015, the government imposed two different fishing bans in the Rio Doce basin:

Area of fishing ban	Objective	Exception
Minas Gerais state: All Rio Doce basin comprised in the state, including tributary rivers.	To restore the freshwater biodi-versity following the impacts of the disaster.	Fishing for subsistence and scientific purposes under certain conditions, exotic species are allowed to be fished in certain amounts.
Espírito Santo state: Ban applied only in the marine areas, from the mouth of the Rio Doce and up to 20 metres in depth between Barra do Riacho (Aracruz municipality) and Degredo/ Ipiranguinha (Linhares municipality). It includes fishes, crustaceans and molluscs.	To avoid public health problems.	Fishing for scientific purposes.



Fishing bans are an appropriate application of the **precautionary principle.** However, the long-standing bans in the Rio Doce basin and coastal areas, despite being relevant, **have held the 'fishers' population in abeyance pending their return to their previous economic activities and traditio-nal way of living.** This has transformed a critical situation (the disaster) into a chronic one, with unpredictable scope and duration.

WHAT IS THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE?

A legal approach adopted as a policy basis when knowledge is limited or where complex environmental relationships are uncertain

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE

The Issue Paper suggests alternative courses of action **in the short and long term to determine whether the bans should remain and to define the criteria that would be applied to lift the bans.**

· Continuation of studies in place with further data to settle the issue of safe consumption of fish and its freshwater biodiversity status.

· Communication of the studies' results and conclusions, making them publicly available.

· Better coordination between TTAC programmes (water quality, biodiversity, fishing, sustainable land use, and others).

· Implementation of sustainable fishery schemes.

· Consultation with the fishers' communities about the status of fisheries together with the use of scientific data.

· Engage with fishers to develop a restocking program for native fish species.

RIO DOCE FACTS

1. Fisheries in Brazil are economically essential and contribute BRL 5 billion to national GDP, mobilising 800,000 professionals and employing 3.5 million people directly and indirectly (Brazil, 2014).

2. Studies estimate that there are one million fishers in Brazil, of whom 99% are artisanal fishers (da Silva, 2014), and one out of three is a woman.

3. As of December 2018, Renova Foundation has registered 21,864 families who practised fishing activities, out of which, 11,002 families are in Minas Gerais and 10,862 families in Espírito Santo.

4. Around 12,750 people in Minas Gerais and 14,272 in Espírito Santo, totalling 27,022 people, declared themselves to be engaged in ancillary professions linked to fishing.

Recommendations

1. Work closely with the Inter-Federative Committee (CIF) to devise a unified decision-making framework and schedule that would permit the removal of fishing bans, including the gathering of freshwater biodiversity and fish toxicity indicators, and an integrated analysis to reflect the concerns of affected parties, regulatory agencies and scientists.

2. Engage women and men fishers as an integral part of the monitoring network to measure the indicators that would permit removal of the fishing bans and the start of a sustainable fishing programme.

3. Communicate the results of the overall assessment on freshwater biodiversity and fish toxicity, and the results of the integrated analysis to affected communities, government authorities and the media.

Read the full report: **https://www.iucn.org/riodocepanel/issue-paper-2-EN**
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