



Partners

Common Wadden Sea Secretariat

ENDA

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Governments and their technical services in the sub-region

Local, national and international NGOs

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PRCM (Regional Programme for the conservation of marine and coastal zone in West Africa) jointly established by IUCN, Wetlands International, FIBA (International Foundation for the Banc d'Arguin), and WWF in collaboration with CSRP

Royal Netherlands embassy in Senegal

Sub-regional Fisheries Commission (CSRP)

The World Bank

WWF's global network



WAMER Western African Marine Eco-region programme

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WWF WAMER Western African Marine Eco-region programme

WAMER Programme

(WWF Western African Marine Eco-region programme)

WWF's marine and coastal conservation programme for West Africa was established in 2000 and covers the Western African Marine Ecoregion (WAMER) which has a coastline of 3,500 kms and covers six countries: **Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea** and **Cape-Verde**. Coastal habitats include rocky cliffs and sandy beaches in the north, and mangroves, estuaries and mudflats in the south. It is characterized by remarkable hydrological conditions for the development of abundant and diversified aquatic resources. The area benefits from a trophic enrichment linked to upwellings (caused by winds and currents which combine to cause deep nutrient-rich waters to the surface). As a result, it is one of the most productive fishing zones in the world, and attracts distant water fleets from Europe and Asia.

Fishing and tourism are two key sectors of the economic and social life of WAMER Ecoregion countries.

The coastline of the ecoregion includes six globally important Marine Protected Areas (**Banc d'Arguin** and **Diawling National Parks** in Mauritania, **Djoudj** and **Delta du Saloum National Parks** in Senegal, and the **Bijagos Archipelago** and **Jão Vieira National Parks** in Guinea-Bissau). These parks are nurseries and breeding areas for hundreds of species of fish and endangered species like marine turtles and cetaceans while also serving as stop-over and wintering areas for the palearctic migratory birds.



The ecoregion faces a number of challenges including:

- Increasing population pressure on the coastal areas;
- Institutional weakness of governmental bodies in charge of fisheries and marine and coastal environmental management;
- The inability of civil society to act as an effective pressure group;
- The sectoral approach taken to tackle development issues;
- The inadequacy of participatory, integrated and subregional approaches towards issues linked with marine and coastal ecosystems;
- Fisheries agreements which do not pay adequate attention to the conservation of fish stocks and their habitat;
- Oil exploitation and tourism which threaten the integrity of marine and coastal environments;
- Unsustainable fishing methods and practices (dynamite fishing, beach seines with very small-sized mesh).

To accomplish its mission and meet these challenges, WWF's Marine Programme for West Africa has 4 foci managed by environmental professionals:

- Marine Protected Areas (MPA),
- Species,
- Sustainable fisheries coupled with micro-finance and capacity development for civil society and the private sector,
- External threats and environmental policies.

The above programmes are buttressed by an experienced and regionally respected communications department.

Overall objective

The overall objective of the WAMER programme is to conserve biodiversity and biological processes by helping local communities and their governments sustainably manage marine and coastal resources.

Specific objectives

- › Establish and sustainably manage Marine Protected Areas;
- › Conserve threatened flagship marine species (marine turtles, cetaceans, etc.);
- › Reduce the major threats to key ecosystems (pollution, unsustainable tourism...);
- › Sustainably and equitably utilize marine and coastal resources;
- › Support the governments of the ecoregion and sub-regional organizations (e.g. Sub-regional Fisheries Commission) in developing and applying national and regional policies and legislation;
- › Reduce poverty and enhance food security for coastal communities.

Distinctions

- › 2003: An Award for Excellence from WWF's Africa Madagascar Programme;
- › 2004: A certificate from the Senegalese Environment Ministry recognizing WWF WAMER's contribution to nature conservation;
- › 2005: Letter of thanks from the government of Cape Verde;
- › 2006: Best Team work distinction among WWF's marine programmes world-wide.

Achievements

- Establishment of Marine Protected Areas in Senegal and Cap Verde,
- Development and implementation of an action plan to promote sustainable fishing,
- Campaign to stop the capture of juvenile fish,
- Establishment of a micro-finance facility in Cayar and Popenguine-Senegal (to reduce poverty while promoting conservation),
- Ecoregional conservation action plan developed with PRCM partners (Regional Programme for the conservation of marine and coastal zone in West Africa,
- Mapping of priority conservation areas,
- Development and implementation of an action plan for marine turtle conservation in the ecoregion in collaboration with PRCM partners,
- Support for the establishment of a coalition of journalists and environmental specialists,
- Development of marine conservation and sustainable tourism programme in Cape Verde,
- Capacity strengthening for fisheries NGOs and Professional Fishes' emen Associations in the sub-region,
- Promotion of the environment as a priority for sustainable development.

