

**Introduction**

Sierra Leone is located on the west coast of Africa between Guinea to the north and west and Liberia to the south. Excluding offshore islands, the coastline extends approximately 825km. From the northern border to just south of Sherbro Island much of the coast consists of deltas and lagoons, with some areas protected by barrier islands. Mangrove forests and littoral swamps extend well inland, as much as 125km in the north and 50km in the south. Below Sherbro, the coast becomes sandy, with scattered swamps.

The Kolente or Great Scarcies River forms the border with Guinea (the exact location of the border within/along the river is disputed) and the Mano River is the border with Liberia. The Sierra Leone River Estuary forms a delta, just north of Freetown. Tidal flows influence waters up to 42 miles inland along this waterway, suggesting that any oil entering this estuary may have far-reaching impacts. This estuary is the only Ramsar site recognised in Sierra Leone and is named as important waterbird habitat, with more than 36 species found here in numbers greater than 10,000, some of them breeding locally. The Taia River enters the Atlantic via an estuary protected by Sherbro Island and the Turtle Islands. This area is also affected by tides and faces the similar risks to those of the Sierra Leone River.

Avian species - over 600 species of birds are found in Sierra Leone, of which, more than 100 are associated with marine and coastal habitats. While only one of those species is listed as Critically Endangered (Balearic Shearwater), several others are considered Near Threatened and coastal areas support breeding and migratory colonies.

Marine mammals - West African Manatee (Vulnerable), Humpback dolphin, Clymene dolphin, Fraser's Dolphin and Pygmy Killer Whale. Note: All cetaceans found in this area are listed as Data Deficient.

Sea turtles - five of the eight species of sea turtle are found in Sierra Leone – Green, Hawksbill, Leatherback, Loggerhead and Olive Ridley. All but the green turtle nest on Sierra Leone beaches. All are Endangered or Vulnerable to extinction.

**Regional Seas**

Atlantic Ocean

**Past experience**

There have been no major oil spills reported in Sierra Leone.

**Response: the role of the authorities**

The Harbour Master is the designated overall commander for oil spill clean-up. The Command Centre would be at the Harbour Division of the Sierra Leone Ports Authority. Competent national authority is the Department of Transport and Communications, Sierra Leone Maritime Administration. The Senior Assistant Secretary of the Department is responsible for mobilising resources and liaising with outside agencies.

Limited oil spill response equipment is held by oil companies operating in the area. There is no dedicated government response equipment and Sierra Leone is not a signatory on any regional or bilateral response agreements.

**Oiled wildlife response**Formal guidelines?

There are no formal guidelines in place for oiled wildlife response in Sierra Leone.

Response objectives and strategy

N/A

Euthanasia or rehabilitation?

It is likely that rehabilitation would be allowed but no expertise exists in country. There appear to be no religious or cultural prohibitions on humane euthanasia.

Impact assessment

There is a Sierra Leone Environmental Protection Agency, which would be involved in environmental impact assessment. It is likely that the Ministry of Marine Resources and Fisheries would also be involved, as well as the Conservation and Wildlife Management Unit of the Forestry Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security.

Notification and early response

There is no notification and early response plan which includes wildlife.

**Wildlife responders**

There is no oiled wildlife response expertise in Sierra Leone at this time. Government departments which may be involved in spill response include the Conservation and Wildlife Management Unit, Forestry Division, Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security, the Ministry of Marine Resources and Fish, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

NGOs involved in conservation and wildlife issues include members of the Environmental Forum for Action (ENFORAC, Sierra Leone), in particular the founding organization the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (a Birdlife International partner organization), the Center for Biodiversity Research (Impact Assessment), Environmental Foundation for Africa and Friends of the Earth Sierra Leone. In addition, several universities' biological science programs cooperate as members of ENFORAC. The African Mangrove Network, a multi-national organisation, would be another group likely to become involved in impact assessment and habitat restoration within any affected mangrove swamps.

**Cooperation between stakeholders**

There is no formal arrangement for cooperation between stakeholders.

**Permanent facilities**

There are no permanent facilities in place to clean and care for oiled wildlife.

**Current processes**

There are currently no processes in place for response to oiled wildlife

**Documentation and references**General references

ITOPF Sierra Leone Country Profile



Sierra Leone Environmental Protection Act 2008  
Sierra Leone Evaluation-Ramsar

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