

Mozambique Marine Species Protection Welcomed

By
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A new commercial fishing law has been enacted in Mozambique. Under this law protection is granted to threatened marine species, including mantas, mobulas, and whale sharks.

The [new commercial fishing law](#) also includes the following new regulations:

- Fishers must land the full body of any sharks caught with fins attached.
- New clearer regulations for CCPs (community fishing councils)
- A ban on destructive fishing practices on coral, seagrass, or mangroves
- A ban on the harvesting of live coral
- Bycatch must be thrown back unless you have prior written permission to use it for research.

Turtle excluder devices are mandated on industrial and semi-industrial nets.

Change commended.

The change to the legislation is thanks to extensive research and lobbying efforts of the [Marine Megafauna Foundation](#) which has been working in the country for the past 20 years.

“We commend the Mozambican government for taking these bold steps to protect the region’s breathtaking sea life, while still supporting the local fishing culture and economy,” says MMF Conservation Project Manager Emerson Neves.

“This law will make it far easier for our fishing communities to manage their impact by empowering them to create no-take zones and enforce rules limiting the use of gear that is destructive to important coral reef and mangrove habitats.

“This will help us achieve our goal of sustainable fishing for generations to come, so we can both conserve our incredible fish life and allow people to have a stable livelihood and food source.”

Other achievements

MMF’s research has led to several achievements. These include [the discovery that manta rays are two separate species](#) and the first formal studies of these species in Africa.

“The largest identified populations of both reef and giant manta rays in Africa have been identified off the southern Mozambican coastline, making it a critical region for their conservation in the Western Indian Ocean,” explains MMF Co-founder and Principal Scientist, Dr. Andrea Marshall.

MMF has also led groundbreaking research on whale sharks in the region.

“[Our research into the importance of the whale shark habitat in the area and](#) increasing human pressures, such as accidental catch in gillnets, which has halved their global population since the 1980s, helped to justify their inclusion in this new law.

“The Mozambican coast is an internationally important habitat for whale sharks, the world’s largest fish,” elaborates Dr. Simon Pierce, MMF Co-founder and Principal Scientist.

Troubling data

According to MMF, some of the troubling data captured has showed dramatic declines in observational sightings of manta, mobula rays and whale sharks.

The NGO says it reported a [79% decline in whale shark sightings and an 88% decline in reef manta sightings](#), in 2013 and sadly these trends continue.

“Our data now show declines of over [90% for giant mantas, reef mantas, and shortfin devil rays](#) in the south of the country,” reports the MMF.

Economic importance

MMF researchers have estimated the economic importance of manta rays and other megafauna to the Mozambican tourism industry, to be in the region of USD34 million per annum.

The study, lead-authored by Dr Stephanie Venables a senior scientist at MMF, [illustrated the economic impact of manta ray tourism in the Inhambane province](#).

It projects a yearly loss of between USD16-25 million if Mozambique were to lose manta rays.

Manta rays and whale sharks are listed as vulnerable or endangered on the [IUCN Red List](#) with declining populations worldwide.

