

PROPOSED PROJECT  
**SÃO TOMÉ AND  
PRÍNCIPE**



## Protect a Central African Island Refuge for Sea Turtles

The waters and beaches of the archipelago nation of São Tomé and Príncipe host nesting grounds for five of the six globally threatened species of sea turtles: Hawksbill Turtle (CR), Green Turtle (EN), Olive Ridley (VU), Leatherback (VU) and Loggerhead (VU). But the important feeding and nesting sites of these ancient migratory species are increasingly threatened by beachside development and human disturbance, particularly on São Tomé.

The communities of São Tomé and Príncipe are highly dependent on the fisheries around the islands for their livelihoods and food security. The industry employs at least 5,000 local people, second only to cacao production. But overfishing and destructive fishing practices are causing the rapid decline of fish stocks and widespread degradation of these marine ecosystems. The fishing sector remains constrained by poor planning, low conservation capacity and poor monitoring and enforcement. And industrial fishing around São Tomé and Príncipe by foreign fleets (legal and illegal) is putting excessive pressure on marine resources.

Rainforest Trust and our partner, Fauna and Flora International, seek \$572,000 to create 21,505 acres of Marine Protected Areas in São Tomé and Príncipe—the first of their kind in the country. The reserves will consist of both highly restricted and sustainable use areas, with six marine protected areas in Príncipe and two in São Tomé. Their boundaries were agreed upon during community assemblies held on both islands following comprehensive consultation with stakeholders.

### PROTECT DIVERSE MARINE ECOSYSTEMS FROM DESTRUCTION

This project is a major milestone in São Tomé and Príncipe's marine conservation history. It will protect a range of key marine habitats, including rocky reef, rhodolith (unattached chalky nodules resembling coral), sandy bottom, and the country's largest mangrove forest of nearly 600 acres on São Tomé. These habitats are essential to the survival of the threatened turtles and all of the archipelago's myriad marine species. Formal protection of these habitats gives them the only chance of recovery from the degradation they have suffered.

Surveys indicate that the waters of São Tomé may primarily serve as a calving and nursing or resting area for Humpback Whales and so could be vital to the species' long-term survival.

The country's waters also harbor predator species of high importance to overall marine ecosystem health, including Scalloped Hammerhead Shark (CR), Oceanic



**21,505**  
ACRES

**\$572,000**  
PROJECT COST

**\$26.60**  
COST PER ACRE

**30,016** mT  
CO<sub>2</sub> EQUIVALENTS  
STORED

### KEY SPECIES:

Scalloped Hammerhead (CR),  
Hawksbill Turtle (CR),  
Oceanic Whitetip Shark (CR),  
Green Turtle (EN)



Green Turtles

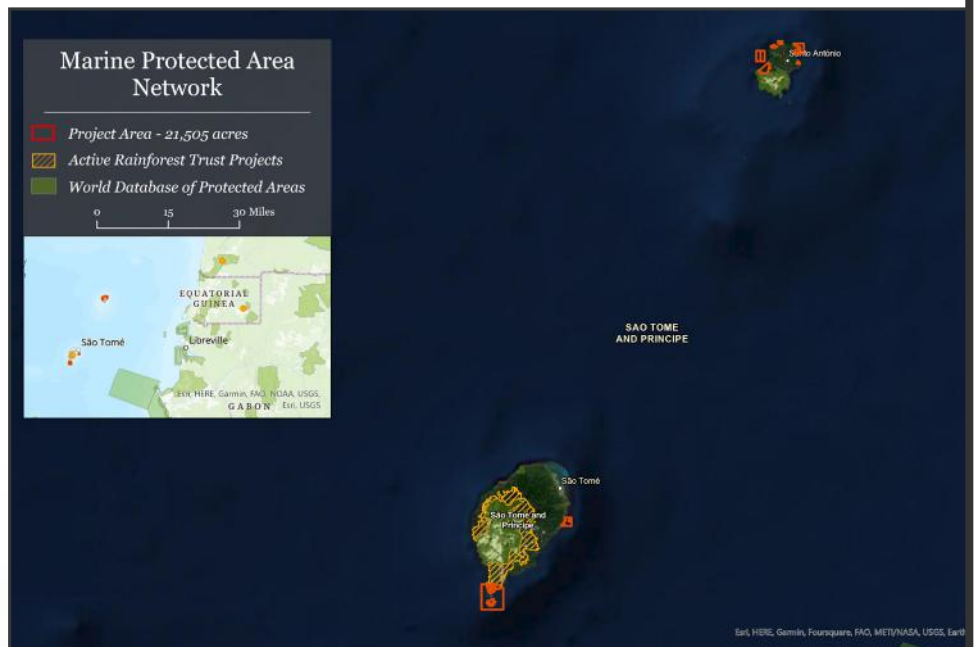
Whitetip Shark (CR), Sand Tiger Shark (CR), Sandbar Shark (EN) and Blue Marlin (VU).

## HELP THREATENED SPECIES BOUNCE BACK

As sensitive marine species face the impacts of climate change, we must protect their feeding, breeding and nesting sites to help build their resilience—especially in this equatorial region that is expected to be disproportionately impacted by climate change.

Ongoing surveys and tagging of marine species will monitor the abundance, size and species present in the marine protected areas. Our partner will engage with small scale fisheries and other stakeholders to ensure sustainable and efficient management of local marine resources.

Once these marine environments are secured, it will be possible for us to explore further expansion of marine protected areas in São Tomé and Príncipe—for the turtles, whales and sharks, and for the fisheries so essential to human communities.



Oceanic Whitetip Shark © Martin Hristov



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