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New Marine Reserve to protect northern Peruvian coast

February 10, 2015

By Hillary Ojeda

Fish populations have been at severe risk in the last few years on Peru's coastlines.



The new reserve will protect wildlife, fishing, and underwater treasures. (Photo: Andina archives)

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The introduction of a new marine reserve in the northern Peruvian coast will provide protection as the landscape and resources have been rapidly diminishing.

A drop in oil prices brought layoffs and soon after, a march of hundreds of affected people in Cabo Blanco on Jan. 30, according to La Republica. The oil company Petrobras Energy Peru let go many workers to make up for losses, and now the ocean is losing.

More workers have entered the already crowded fishing industry and are risking the future of the marine environment stretching from the coastline bordering Ecuador down through El Alto, Cabo Blanco, Piura and Tumbes. However, the Inkaterra Association has an idea to help. The hope is to establish a reserve that protects 650 thousand hectares located off the Piura and Tumbes

coastlines, from the Ecuadorian border down to Lobitos beach.

The founder and president of the association, Jose Koechlin, told La Republica about the plans for the reserve, Cabo Blanco-Bank of Mancora Marine Reserve.

The parameters stretch the length of the specified Peruvian coastline, "and within five miles of

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shoreline to avoid affecting the oil wells," he explained. Covering this ground, the reserve will include six coastal districts accounting for about 300,000 inhabitants, reports La Republica.



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The reserve is an effort to eliminate illegal fishing that has depleted the resources and enforce good practice and a more regulated industry, informs Koechlin.

Fighting for their rights to fish, there are 303 different fishing organizations operating in the area. The area is ridden with illegal fishermen and pirates taking work from locals and there are even reports of violent activity among the fishermen. To add, the oil sector's layoffs have tensions building and competition for marine jobs is rising. Most take on ecotourism, marine sports, whale watching, and fishing after oil jobs run dry.

Not just the reserves, but better education for the communities on sustainable fishing practices will be implemented as well. CEO of Inkaterra Joseph Purisaca told La Republica of the management and education plans.

"Proper management will allow the recovery of overexploited, threatened, rare or endangered species. This helps to improve the quality of life of people who depend on those resources in the area of influence of the marine reserve," he added.

As the reserve would cover areas valued by scientists, archaeologists, environmentalists, and fishermen world-wide, its introduction has been supported by many.

The Ministry of the Environment of Peru, the National Service of Protected Areas by the State (Sernanp), the National Geographic Society, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Nasa of the oceans of the world), and marine departments of multiple universities around the world are just a few who have raised their voices in support of this project.

According to La Republica, the Bank of Mancora holds an ecosystem at the summit of an underwater mountain that has mystified scientists. And just as fascinating are the treasures of underwater archaeology left behind by ages of shipwrecks.

These are just a couple additional features to the rich recreational tourism and wilderness areas that the Bank of Mancora has in its borders.

"I insist" Koechlin says, "the marine reserve will not create more restrictions but will make Peru a model country in the world for good marine practice."

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