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## **New report exposes expanded oil project plans in the DRC, endangering ecosystems and communities**

*Newly approved tenders overlap with over 100 million hectares in protected areas, Key Biodiversity Areas, and intact tropical forests throughout the Democratic Republic of Congo*

**July 29, 2025 (Kinshasa, DRC /Sacramento, CA)** — A [new report](#) from Earth Insight and partners reveals that the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) recently approved tenders for oil development across more than half the country, launching a new licensing round for 55 oil blocks—52 newly announced in 2025 and three previously awarded.

This new report, in partnership with DRC-based groups Our Land Without Oil and CORAP, as well as Rainforest Foundation UK, is based on [spatial mapping and analysis](#) released in June, and details dramatic expansion of extractive activities that pose major threats to forests and protected areas that are critical to the health of communities and the planet. The key findings reveal that:

- Oil blocks overlap with **8.3 million hectares (23%) of protected areas, 8.6 million hectares (23%) of Key Biodiversity Areas, and 66.8 million hectares (64%) of intact tropical forests.**
- **72%** of the newly established Kivu–Kinshasa **Green Corridor**, a flagship conservation initiative announced in early 2025, is now overlapped by oil blocks, jeopardizing its ecological integrity and undermining its credibility as a sustainable development and climate solution.
- The **Cuvette Centrale**, the world’s largest tropical peatland complex and a crucial carbon sink storing an estimated **30 gigatons of carbon**, is at **serious risk of degradation**, with the majority of the DRC’s peatland area now included in newly designated oil blocks.
- An estimated **39 million people** over approximately 37,000 cities, towns and villages live within the new oil blocks. This includes many Indigenous Peoples and forest-based communities who depend on intact forests, rivers, and healthy ecosystems for their livelihoods, cultures and survival.

Despite the DRC government launching this new licensing round, this decision has been met with widespread local and international opposition. Civil society has actively mobilized to stop the expansion of oil and gas in the DRC, coordinating an [international week of actions in June](#) targeting DRC government institutions as well as multinational corporations. A recent campaign called Our Land Without Oil (Notre Terre Sans Pétrole) has also emerged from a civil society

coalition [who issued a declaration](#) last October that called for these oil concessions to be permanently removed and not re-auctioned.

*“Imagine: 39 million Congolese people - almost half the population - and 64% of our forests could be directly affected by the awarding of these oil blocks,” said **Pascal Mirindi, Campaign Coordinator, Notre Terre Sans Pétrole**. “And all this while the government is promoting the “Kivu-Kinshasa ecological corridor”. Where is the logic? Where is the coherence? We are reminding our leaders that the Congolese people are the primary sovereign. We will not remain silent while certain people organize themselves to sell off our future.”*

Scientists have warned that the Congo Basin may be approaching a dangerous ecological tipping point, beyond which its forests could begin to lose their capacity to absorb carbon and instead become a net source of greenhouse gas emissions. Commonly referred to as “Africa’s lungs,” the Congo Basin is the world’s largest carbon sink. Despite the global significance of landscapes across the DRC, the country has faced escalating threats from oil and gas extraction in recent years. In July 2022, the DRC government launched tenders for 27 oil and 3 gas blocks, covering vast areas of land across the country, including in highly sensitive primary forests.

*“Oil and gas development in these fragile ecosystems would have devastating impacts on biodiversity, communities, land rights, and the global fight against climate change,” said **Anna Bebbington, Research Manager, Earth Insight**. “This is why this report calls on the DRC government and international partners to cancel the 2025 oil tender and invest in alternative development models that respect Indigenous and community rights, sustain local livelihoods, and safeguard biodiversity and the climate.”*

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#### **About Earth Insight**

Earth Insight builds critical transparency tools and momentum for restricting fossil fuel, mining, and other industrial expansion threats to key ecosystems and Indigenous and local communities. Our research, communications, and engagement work is central to supporting policy interventions that key political and financial actors can make to protect critical ecosystems as a vital step towards addressing both the biodiversity and climate crises.

#### **Partners Include:**

[About Our Land Without Oil](#) (*Notre Terre Sans Pétrole*), is a campaign and coalition of civil society groups calling for the definitive renunciation of any future hydrocarbon exploitation

projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It promotes environmentally friendly energy alternatives that respect the rights of local communities.

#### [CORAP](#)

CORAP is a platform of civil society organizations that brings together more than 50 civil society organizations involved in monitoring reforms and actions implemented by the authorities in the DRC. CORAP's mission is to constantly mobilize Civil Society organizations to positively influence state policies in favor of the socio-economic interests of grassroots communities.

#### [Rainforest Foundation UK](#)

Rainforest Foundation UK is committed to both human rights and environmental protection when it comes to tackling deforestation. Locally, we support forest communities to gain land rights, challenge destructive industries, manage their forests and protect their environment. Globally, we campaign to influence national and international laws and policies that protect rainforests and their inhabitants.