

Google joins fight against illegal fishing

November 14 2014



One of the challenges in tackling illegal fishing has been the lack of jurisdiction on the high seas

Technology giant Google has taken the battle against illegal fishing online, with the company unveiling a tool in Australia on Friday that harnesses satellite data to track thousands of boats in real time.

A prototype interactive [tool](#), which was developed in conjunction with [environmental activists](#) SkyTruth and marine advocacy group Oceana, was unveiled at the once-a-decade World Parks Congress in Sydney.

The tool is the latest salvo from environmentalists against [illegal fishing](#), which is currently estimated by the Global Ocean Commission to cost the [world economy](#) up to US\$23.5 billion a year.

"While many of the environmental trends in the [ocean](#) can be sobering, the combination of cloud computing and massive data is enabling new tools to visualise, understand and potentially reverse these trends," Brian Sullivan of Google's Earth Outreach and Oceans section said.

The tool uses data points from the Automatic Identification System network, which picks up GPS broadcasts of a vessel's location to map movements.

The prototype has tracked just over 3,000 fishing vessels, with a public tool set to be released down the track.

SkyTruth said the system, which will only monitor fishing vessels, would make activities usually invisible to the wider public easily viewable.

"So much of what happens out on the high seas is invisible, and that has been a huge barrier to understanding and showing the world what's at stake for the ocean," SkyTruth's president and founder John Amos said.



An office worker checks out a map on Google's satellite image service, in Hong Kong, on October 18, 2005

"Satellite data is allowing us to make human interaction with the ocean more transparent than ever before."

The Global Ocean Commission, an independent panel launched in February 2013, said evidence showed seas have been fished to dangerously low levels, with 90 percent of the world's large fish stocks—such as tuna and swordfish—already gone.

The commission said one of the challenges in tackling illegal fishing was the lack of jurisdiction on the high seas.

While the high seas make up 64 percent of the ocean's total surface area, they fall beyond national jurisdictions and suffer from a lack of oversight, the organisation said.

The World Parks Congress, which is being held in Sydney until November 19, has drawn thousands of delegates and is set to lay out a global agenda for protected areas for the next decade.

© 2014 AFP

Citation: Google joins fight against illegal fishing (2014, November 14) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-11-google-illegal-fishing.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.