

China accepts group's case against ConocoPhillips, CNOOC

July 27 2015

A Chinese court says it has accepted a case brought by a social organization against oil giants ConocoPhillips China and China National Offshore Oil Corp. over oil spills in northern China in 2011.

It is the first case brought by a social organization over maritime pollution since China changed its law to allow registered non-government organizations who have been dealing with environmental issues for at least five years to sue heavy polluters.

Qingdao Maritime Court said that the plaintiff, China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation, wants the defendants to "immediately repair the damage in the Bohai Bay's ecosystem" so as to restore the area to its original state before the oil spill.

In June 2011, [oil spills](#) from an oilfield jointly owned by Houston-based ConocoPhillips' Chinese subsidiary and CNOOC, China's main offshore oil and gas producer, drained into the Bohai Sea and its bay.

China's changes to its Environmental Protection Law, which took effect Jan. 1 and also allow for unlimited fines against persistent polluters, were the first in 25 years and a response to the country's serious pollution problems.

The Beijing-based China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation is a nonprofit, independent [social organization](#) that nevertheless has representatives of the environment ministry,

forestry bureau and State Oceanic Administration as part of its management structure, according to its website.

Qingdao Maritime Court said on its microblog that the organization filed the lawsuit on July 7 and the court accepted it two weeks later.

In 2012, ConocoPhillips and CNOOC reached a \$160 million agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture to settle compensation claims related to the spill. ConocoPhillips also said it would help pay for social projects in Bohai Bay and reduce pollutants in the bay.

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