Fact Sheet on Potential Ecosystem Impacts of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) on the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA)

The Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA), a UNESCO World Heritage site, is internationally recognized for its exceptional biodiversity, cultural heritage, and ecological significance.While the pipeline does not directly cross the NCA, both the pipeline's route and the NCA lie within Tanzania's Internal Drainage Basin (IDB)[1], a closed watershed where water does not flow to the sea. For instance, the Lake Eyasi Drainage Basin, part of the IDB, is crossed by an estimated 235 km of the pipeline, with the shortest distance to the lake being approximately 100 km. Given Lake Eyasi's ecological, hydrological, and socio-economic connections with the NCA, pollution in the lake could significantly affect the NCA.

Studies advocating for a basin-wide approach to protecting the NCA emphasize that "most of the Ngorongoro waters originate as rainfall outside the Crater, and travel into the basin as surface or ground water flow, emphasizing the need for a watershed-scale approach to land management." [2] This suggests that an accident or spill along the pipeline could result in oil leakage flowing into and potentially concentrating Lake Eyasi and reach the World Heritage site. With Indigenous and local communities present not only in Ngorongoro but also in surrounding areas, further studies on the pipeline's impact on IDB are essential to safeguard water quality in this naturally dry region.

Given the ongoing biodiversity crisis, it is critical that further studies be done to assess the potential system-wide impacts of the pipeline on the IDB and implications on the integrity of Ngorongoro World Heritage site. However, the East African Crude Oil Pipeline Environmental and Social Impact Assessment currently does not contain sufficient analysis related to the pipeline's holistic impact on the IDB. For example, its Tanzania report acknowledged that the project would cross through the IDB and cause impacts on surface and ground water[3]. However, it only offered a generic analysis of oil spills and accidents, which does not address their impacts[4] on ecosystem integrity and ecosystem functions of the IDB.

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[1] Ministry of Water Resource Division of Tanzania, Water Resource Fact Sheet. https://www.maji.go.tz/uploads/publications/sw1583410972-The%20Internal%20Drainage%20Basin%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf

[2] Daniel M Deocampo, 2004, Hydrogeochemistry in the Ngorongoro Crater, Tanzania, and implications for land use in a World Heritage Site
, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0883292703002099#!

[3] Eacop project, Tanzania ESIA Executive Summary, 2019, https://www.eacop.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/executive-summary-tz-esia.pdf

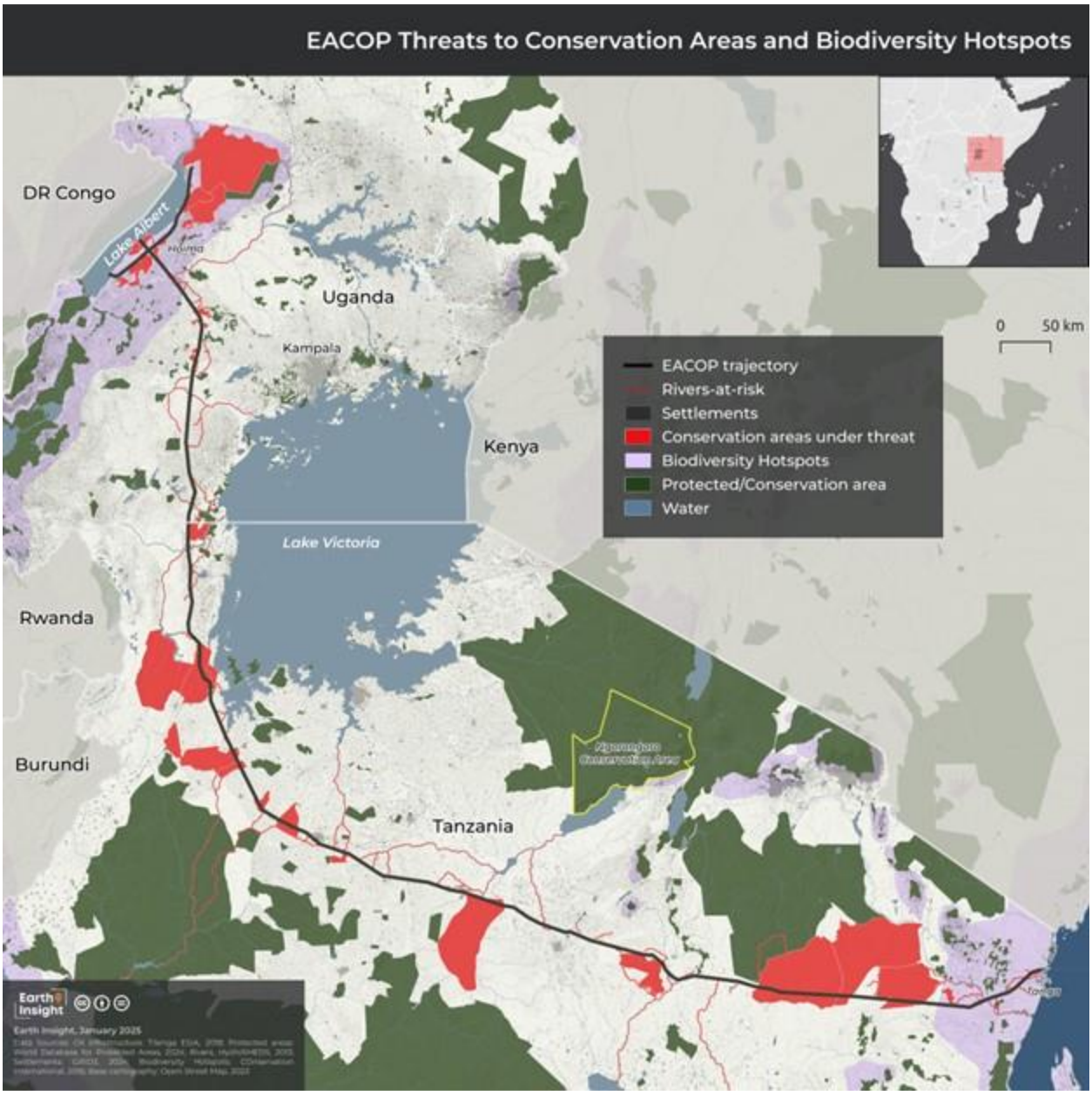
[4] https://banksandbiodiversity.org/six-months-after-the-un-biodiversity-conference-74-civil-society-organizations-call-on-financial-institutions-to-protect-biodiversity-and-take-action-in-implementing-the-global-biodiversity-framework/

Key recommendation to Tanzanian government: Require EACOP developers to conduct basin wide assessment on the pipelines' potential impacts on the IDB watershed and ecosystem integrity, including oil spills, accidents, and leakages.

Picture 1

Caption: Threats to conservation areas and rivers by the projected EACOP Pipeline passing through protected areas, threatened water bodies and other ecosystems around the Ngorongoro World Heritage Site

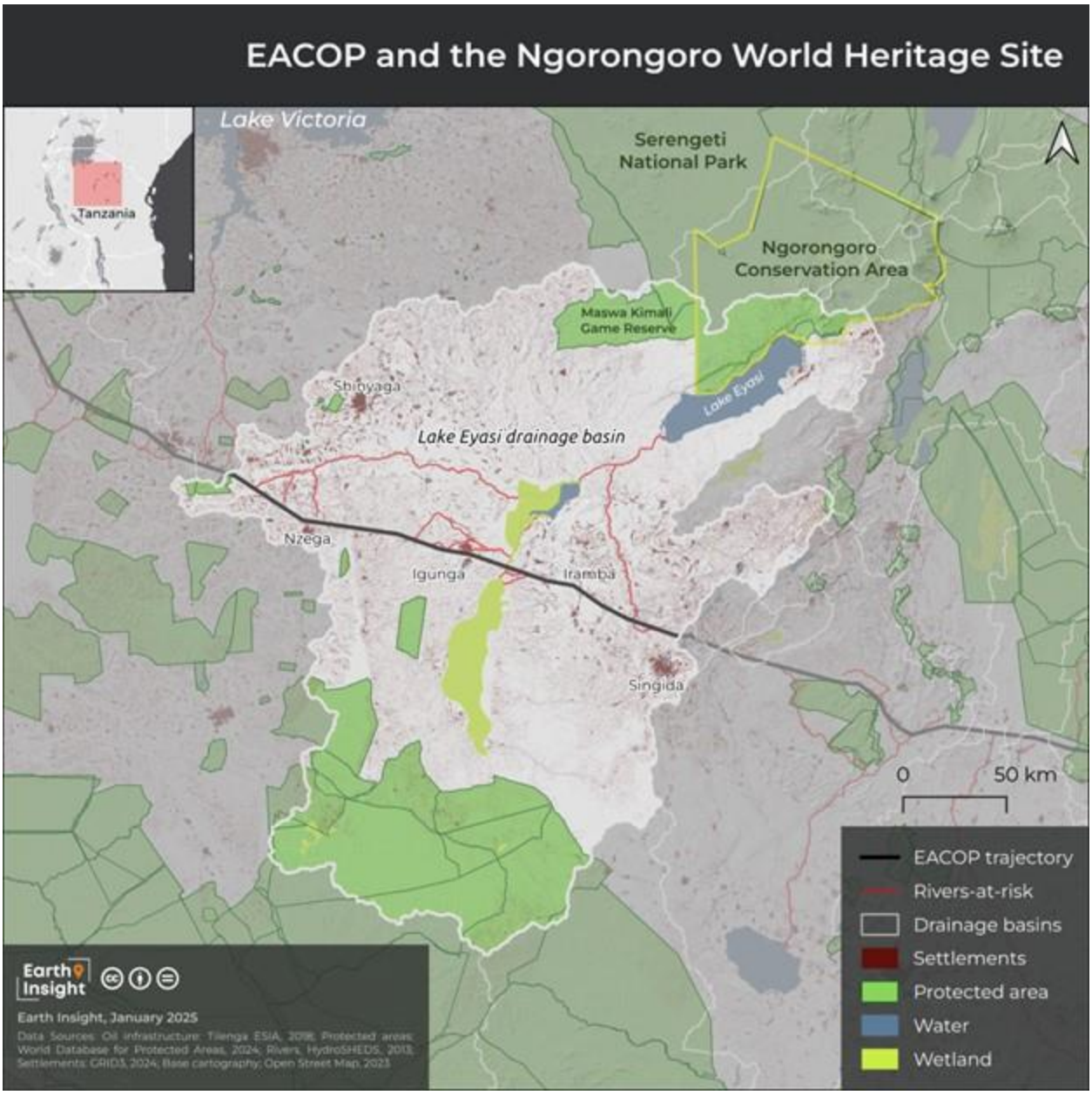
Credit: Earth Insight, 2025



Picture 2

Caption: Map (draft) showing EACOP's proposed path through the Lake Eyasi Basin near the Ngorongoro World Heritage site, with pollution risks to the area

Credit: Earth Insight, 2025


EACOP and the Ngorongoro World Heritage Site
Lake Victoria
Tanzania
Serengeti National Park
Ngorongoro Conservation Area
Maswa Kimali Game Reserve
Lake Eyasi
Shinyaga
Lake Eyasi drainage basin
Nzega
Igunga
Iramba
Singida
0
50 km
EACOP trajectory
Rivers-at-risk
Drainage basins
Settlements
Protected area
Water
Wetland
Earth Insight
Earth Insight, January 2025
Data Sources: Oil infrastructure: Tilenga ESIA, 2018; Protected areas: World Database for Protected Areas, 2024; Rivers: HydroSHEDS, 2013; Settlements: GRID3, 2024; Base cartography: Open Street Map, 2023