

Rio Tinto Recovery Project

The Rio Tinto

The Rio Tinto is classified as a "Small Northern River". Its source is in the "Montes da Costa", in the parish of Ermesinde, in the Valongo municipality, at an altitude close to 200 meters, and it is the last tributary of the River Douro's right bank, flowing into the area of Freixo, parish of Campanhã, in the municipality of Porto.

The Rio Tinto has been an important natural resource for centuries. The quality of its water and the good conservation of its banks resulted in small medieval villages settling there. Using small rotation mills or watermills, they used the driving force of the water that ran towards the Douro.

In recent decades, part of the natural and built heritage on the Rio Tinto's river basin has been degrading, primarily due to the high urban pressure and pollution it has been subjected to.

The Rio Tinto is subject to intense human activity, with marginal land use practically along its whole course. Examples are the agricultural fields on the river's banks, the settlements built on the river bed and unregulated connections that discharge directly into the river, leading to the consequent water pollution of the Rio Tinto. These aspects have evident, harmful consequences on the population and on the riverside ecosystem itself.

The river basin spans an area of approximately 23.5km² (covering the municipalities of Valongo, Gondomar, Maia, and Porto) and the water course is around 11.4km long.

The protocol

The Rio Tinto runs a course of around 11km, of which approximately 300 meters border our facilities, so our approach to the river reflects our Biodiversity and Social Responsibility strategy.

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In 2013, LIPOR established a collaboration protocol to define a joint action with all those directly involved with the river, namely the municipalities of Gondomar, Maia, Porto, and Valongo; Águas de Gondomar, S.A, Águas do Porto, and Águas de Valongo, S.A ; Fernando Pessoa University; Portuguese Environment Agency (APA) / Northern Regional Hydrographic Administration; and the Parish Councils of Rio Tinto, Ermesinde, Águas Santas, Baguim do Monte, and Campanhã.

The project

The Recovery of the Rio Tinto Project aims to record and confirm the areas of contamination, monitor the water quality progress, allowing the essential river recovery interventions to be sustained, from a technical and scientific point of view, reviving the riverside ecosystem, and establishing its future sustainable uses.

During the implementation, a Monitoring Program for Assessing the Water and Sediment Quality of the Rio Tinto was carried out in order to identify the causes of water quality degradation. Based on that assessment, a set of interventions for recovering the river and its banks has been established. When visiting the river and entering our facilities, it's also possible to observe a set of natural engineering practices on the river banks and bed.

Furthermore, in 2015, LIPOR recreated the "Guarda-Rios" (River Guard) figure. Monitoring the section of the river that borders the LIPOR facilities daily, our "River Guard" fills in an Inspection Bulletin daily, which is compiled monthly and sent to the Partners of the Rio Tinto Collaboration Protocol.

This Recovery project is complemented by the 'Bringing the Rio Tinto Closer to the Community' Strategy which includes some elements we've already mentioned, namely the environmental interpretation center and LIPOR's very own Parque Aventura (Adventure Park) and Eco-Trail.