

**PROPOSED RE-ZONATION AND RE-ALIGNMENT OF THE GOUKAMMA MARINE
PROTECTED AREA**

MINUTES OF THE STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION MEETING

Venue: Royal Hotel, 24 Queen St, Knysna 6571

Date: 20th March 2014

Time: 17:30 – 19:30

1 Attendance

NAME	ORGANISATION	EMAIL ADDRESS / FAX NUMBER	PHONE NUMBER
Johann Strauss	Southern Cape Shore Angling President	scangling@netactive.co.za	082 571 3109
Xolani Myanga	CapeNature	myangaxolani@gmail.com	083 390 9617
Siyasanga Mpehle	CapeNature	siya.capenature@gmail.com	021 866 1013
Sandra Setati	CapeNature	tiou.ssetati@gmail.com	021 866 8039
Wayne Meyer	CapeNature	wmeyer@capenature.co.za	079 089 6338
Kyle Smith	SANParks	kyle.smith@sanparks.org	044 343 1302
Len Dabner	Old Belvedere Conservancy	fonlen@telkomsa.net	044 387 1554
Gerhard Liebenberg	Fantique Trade 627 CC	ngliebenberg@telkomsa.net	082 924 4678
Keith Spencer	CapeNature	keith@capenature.co.za	082 494 1880
Pierre de Villiers	CapeNature	estuaries@capenature.co.za	083 236 2924
Alexis Olds	CapeNature	aolds@capenature.co.za	021 866 8040
Thobani Mbonane	CapeNature	tmbonane@capenature.co.za	044 533 2125
Barry Clark	Anchor Environmental	info@anchorenvironmental.co.za	021 701 3420
Vera Liebau	Anchor Environmental	info@anchorenvironmental.co.za	021 701 3420

2 Welcome and Introduction

Dr Barry Clark opened the public participation meeting by introducing himself and outlining the purpose of the meeting. He explained that comments and recommendations will be received after a 20-30 minute presentation outlining the rationale behind the proposed re-zoning and re-alignment of the borders of the Goukamma Marine Protected Area (MPA). He also pointed out that Vera Liebau will be capturing all comments raised during the meeting. Johann Strauss offered Anchor Environmental and CapeNature to provide data on fish species, numbers, sizes and weight that he has been collecting as part of the Southern Cape Shore Angling Club.

3 Presentation

Please refer to the attached PowerPoint presentation for details on this presentation.

4 Stakeholder comments

Johann Strauss is the president of Southern Cape Shore Angling. He agreed that the existence of MPAs with no-take zones is paramount to protecting remaining fish stocks and acknowledged that shore anglers are likely to benefit in the future. He also emphasised that his angling club has been working in a collaborative relationship with CapeNature for a long time. He proposed that the no-take zone should start 2km west of the of the Goukamma estuary, rather than at the river mouth. He argued that this small stretch of coast has a recreational picnics site and that holiday makers and locals will continue utilising this area for braaing and swimming and would like to be able to continue angling here as well. Furthermore, Johann Strauss said that this part is the only easy access point and that it is an internationally recognised shore angling spot. Shore anglers prefer almost exclusively sandy beach rather than rocky shore, which extends and dominates to the east and west of the MPA. He emphasised that access is already limited by the holiday season (competitive use of the beach area), dependency on water conditions and opening of the temporary open/closed Goukamma estuary. He expressed serious concern that the area available to shore anglers would be shrunk substantially by the proposed changes to the Goukamma MPA and that it would be impossible to squeeze 150 anglers onto Myoli Beach to the west.

Dr Barry Clark responded by assuring that this comment will be taken into consideration by the Minister before a final decision, but that he is not able to make such decisions.

Johann Straus repeated that the remaining area would be too small to accommodate all shore anglers and that access and lack of parking would be the main issues should the area be closed as proposed. He also explained that shore anglers need rocky ledges or beach (preferred coast type) to fish from.

Johann Strauss also commented on the problems surrounding the selling of red bait as bait. He had observed that after a storm there is a scramble to collect all the washed up red bait and that red bait is sold for substantial amounts to the recreational fishermen. He expressed concern about legalising

this currently “informal right” and argued that if enough money is offered people will start harvesting live red bait in addition to collecting washed up material.

Gerhard Liebenberg (traditional linefish rights holder) pointed out that the intention to open up the reef area on the eastern side of the MPA (around the point) to fishing could be detrimental to fish stocks in that area. He estimated that this small area would be fished out within 6 months. He recommended shifting the southern margin of the proposed boundary southward to include a portion of the reef in this area in the no-take zone. He also pointed out that fishing effort as presented in the concept document (Götz *et al.* 2009) is outdated and that not very much fishing has been occurring on the eastern margins of the MPA for the past 5 years. He explained that currently most commercial fishing is occurring to the west of the MPA (west of Gerrike’s Point), including boat-based recreational fishing. He pointed out that the recreational boat-based fishers were not well represented at the meeting and that he would like to speak on their behalf. According to his knowledge, recreational fishermen expend a lot of effort on the western edge of the MPA, especially along the southwest margin of the existing MPA boundaries. Travel cost determines how far the recreational boat-based fishermen can go and rough weather conditions restricts when the recreational fishermen can go out to sea. He proposed that the south-western boundary of the proposed MPA be shifted to the right, meeting the southern boundary at a 90 degree angle, while the northern boundary remains the same. Further, Gerhard Liebenberg stated that from a conservation perspective, the MPA should be extended all the way to the west to include the entire reef, extending 1.5 nautical miles (2.78 km) offshore. He also pointed out that fishing on the reef is very dependent on ocean condition and that even the slightest swell makes it too dangerous for boats to fish in this area. He also explained that very few red roman are caught at depths greater than 15 metres in this area.

Dr Barry Clark responded by saying that in his experience, large red roman tend to be most abundant between 20 and 30 metres depth and that this behaviour was unusual.

Pierre de Villiers thanked Gerhard Liebenberg for his input and advice.

Keith Spencer pointed out that the MPA boundary is intended to be aligned along a line of latitude to assist compliance by fishermen and ensure easier compliance monitoring. The proposed southern boundary can be shifted south and should be shifted to an appropriate line of latitude. Further, he also recognised that the southern boundary of the proposed MPA should not be joint to the peninsula on the east, but rather shifted south, and that an eastern boundary parallel to the western boundary be established. The exact coordinates will have to be determined should this be taken forward.

Gerhard Liebenberg informed participants that MPA boundaries not in line with latitude is not a problem for commercial fishermen as they are tracked by satellite at all times. They are even tracked when stopping for fuel and are cautious when approaching MPA borders. This is particularly important as the boats drift fish for red roman and may drift into the MPA without such intention.

Keith Spencer also contributed to the discussion by pointing out that there had been several shark attacks at the slip way in Buffels Bay (on the eastern boundary of the MPA). He also said that opening up the eastern side of the MPA to fishing may result in conflict between recreational users of this area (swimmers and surfers) and boats. He also expressed concern that the Sedgfield

community was not represented at the meeting and that it would be vital to incorporate their opinion as 60-70% of fishing takes place within walking distance of the western boundary of the MPA. This was mostly expended by Sedgefield residents.

Pierre de Villiers suggested that Keith Spencer's staff could talk to the Sedgefield fishing community to gauge their opinions on the proposed changes to the MPA boundary.

Keith Spencer re-assured participants that most of the recreational fishers have been informed about this process, but that they are not an organised voice. Perhaps one could try and involve them during the formal commenting process (after publication of the *Gazette* notice).

Johann Strauss recommended advertising this notice in local tackle shops, where discussion around this topic is likely to start.

Gerhard Liebenberg noted that no recreational boat fishermen were present at the meeting.

Pierre de Villiers assured that they had been included in the communications. However, it will be important to make an effort to spread the formal notice out as far as possible.

Wayne Meyer agreed that it is risky to open up the south-eastern part (the point) of the MPA to fishing.

Dr Barry Clark suggested that it could be proposed to shift the western boundary of the MPA westwards in exchange of losing some area in the east. He argued that a fair amount of illegal fishing is going on in the south-eastern part of the MPA and that it may be worthwhile protecting the western reef area instead.

Pierre de Villiers clarified that if the boundary is shifted south, the south-eastern part of the MPA would remain a no-take zone.

Johann Strauss asked who will make the final decision.

Dr Barry Clark explained that the Minister will be advised by scientists from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries as well as CapeNature. Anchor Environmental will make recommendations based on the outcome of this meeting and relay the issues raised by the public. The outcome should be a compromise which includes fulfilling the commitment to expand the protected area network as far as possible and at the same time minimising negative effects on stakeholders.

Keith Spencer added that there are about 8 boats that launch in the West (Gerricke's Point) and this user group should be consulted as well. He also said that the committee members understand the importance of no-take zones for the recovery of our fish stocks.

Johann Strauss emphasised that his club members are only engaging in catch and release and fish are only measured and not weighed to minimise stress. Humane handling of fish is encouraged as dead fish do not count in the competition.

Keith Spencer also mentioned the ski boat club that has a permit for the utilisation and managing of the slip way on the eastern side of the MPA. In general, persons using Jet Skis for fishing are well

behaved in the surf zone, not interfering with other users. According to the proposed changes, Jet Skis would not be allowed to launch from the beach. However, Keith Spencer proposed that perhaps launching of Jet Skis for the purpose of fishing could be allowed as long as their numbers are known, they are registered users of the MPA and are aware of the of the MPA regulations and have safety gear on board.

Pierre de Villiers argued that it was agreed on provincial level that no Jet Skis should be allowed in MPAs. However, he also acknowledged that there is no alternative launch site for Jet Skis in the area. He further added that there is scope for the development of a policy, which should ideally be drafted in collaboration with the Jet Ski user association of the area. He acknowledged that this matter requires more thought and discussion.

Keith Spencer emphasised that the goal is to manage MPAs as equitably as possible. He also referred back to the discussion around red bait harvesting for bait. He explained that most of the red bait is collected at night, where certain individuals bring in groups of to collect washed up red bait until the beach is clean. This rush to score is driven by the informal right which depicts the 'first come first serve' rule. People with no connection or understanding of the marine habitat and regulations are employed by a middle man to exploit the resource. This current situation is difficult to manage as it provides an alternative livelihood for some individuals. Further, it is impossible to build a relationship with the people that are employed by someone else and when the crew turnover rate is high. The other available option is to stop this informal privilege and not to allow the collection of red bait. On the other hand, resident people have complained about the smell of rotting washed up red bait and asked the municipality to come and clean the beach.

Pierre de Villiers recognised that a solution for this would be needed and that a range of solutions will need to be considered before finalising the draft regulations. Most importantly, we must consider unforeseen consequences, in particular the prevention of formal/informal permit holders to harvest live red bait.

Johann Strauss pointed out that as soon as money is involved, a monopoly will establish which will most likely sell their product at the highest price per kilo possible. He also argued that policing the regulations will be the deciding factor at the end of the day.

Kyle Smith added that research has been crucial in bringing us this far, however, it is important to recognise how valuable a snapshot of the present times and the perspective of the people on the ground is. He also pointed out that discussions in this meeting suggested that there could be a shift in fishing pressure which is not captured in the research used to determine the new boundaries of this MPA.

5 Closure

Dr Barry Clark thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He assured that the outcomes of this meeting provided them with valuable insights that will influence the final decision. He also reminded all stakeholders that the commenting period for this pre-public participation process ends on the 25

April 2014 and that a formal commenting period of 60 days will commence as soon as the Notice of intent is published in the *Government Gazette*. The meeting was closed at 19:00.