

Saldanha Bay Aquaculture Management Committee (AMC)  
Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment  
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16 January 2023

**2022 ANNUAL REPORT: PROGRESS BY THE AQUACULTURE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (AMC) FOR THE SALDANHA BAY AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT ZONE (ADZ) TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT (DFFE): BRANCH ENVIRONMENT — REGULATORY COMPLIANCE AND MONITORING.**

This report serves to provide feedback on developments and progress made by the Aquaculture Management Committee (AMC) for the Saldanha Bay Aquaculture Development Zone (ADZ) for the period of January 2022 to December 2022. The Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF, now DFFE: Branch Fisheries Management) conducted an Environmental Impact Assessment process (Basic Assessment) for the establishment of a sea-based ADZ in Saldanha Bay in 2016/2017. The Environmental Authorisation (EA) for the ADZ was granted on 8 January 2018 by the then Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA, now DFFE: Branch Integrated Environmental Authorisations), and appeals process followed where four (4) appeals were received. The decision to uphold the EA was received on 7 June 2018.

The following Authorisations are in place for the Saldanha Bay ADZ:

- ADZ Environmental Authorisation (EA) (14/12/16/3/3/1/1728) issued 8 January 2018 by DFFE: Branch Integrated Environmental Authorisations (DFFE: IEA).
- ADZ EA Amendment 1 (14/112/16/3/3/1/1728/AM1) issued 10 July 2019 by DFFE: IEA.
- ADZ EA Amendment 2 (14/112/16/3/3/1/1728/AM2) issued 16 September 2020 by DFFE: IEA.

The AMC has made significant progress with management of the ADZ over the course of 2022, with notable milestones, management actions and monitoring work summarised below:

**1. Research studies and environmental monitoring reports:**

- Quarterly specialist environmental monitoring report 2 (March 2022)
- Annual Benthic Chemical Survey Report (June 2022)
- Scientific recommendations for the management and expansion of operations (July 2022)
- Quarterly specialist environmental monitoring report 4 (31 August 2022)
- Qualitative Biofouling Survey Report (August 2022)
- Saldanha Bay ADZ Reef Survey (August 2022)
- Quarterly specialist environmental monitoring report 5 (30 November 2022)
- Aids to Navigation Plan (18 November 2022)
- Amended Sampling Plan – Protocols for Environmental Monitoring of the Aquaculture Development Zone in Saldanha Bay, South Africa (8 December 2022)

**2. Environmental Control Officer**

- The DFFE is required to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced independent Environmental Control Officer (ECO) for the construction and operational phase of the ADZ.
- The responsibility of the ECO is to monitor that mitigation or rehabilitation measures and recommendations are implemented, and to encourage compliance with the provisions of the Environmental Management Programme (EMPr).
- The DFFE appointed Errol Cerff for the period October 2020 to September 2021 and a reappointment through a request for quotations from October 2021 on a month-to-month basis for a maximum of six months until March 2022.
- A tender was advertised for a 3-year ECO contract on 5 October 2021 and Anchor Monitoring and Research were appointed as ECO commencing in April 2022 until the end of March 2025.

### **3. Increase in bivalve production threshold**

- After careful consideration of the Specialist environmental monitoring reports, and consideration of scientific recommendations, the AMC raised the Bivalve ungraded production threshold for the Saldanha Bay ADZ from 10 000 tons per annum (tpa) to 12 500 tpa on 18 August 2022. The AMC made this decision in line with the requirements of condition 49 of the EA and table 3-1, condition 4 of the amended EMPr.
- When notified of the increase in Bivalve production threshold, aquaculture operators were asked to provide a projected estimated annual production tonnage (for each farm) and were invited to request increases in infrastructure to increase production. Operators were to submit their requests by 9 September 2022.
- To accurately determine the allowable increases in infrastructure without negatively impacting the environmental functioning of Saldanha Bay, the AMC established a Task Team to revise the infrastructure operational guidelines. Exhaustive meetings were held within the Task Team, and between this Task Team and operators wishing to increase their production. Due to the sensitive nature of Small Bay and the fact that this precinct is closer to reaching carrying capacity, the AMC task team held one-on-one meetings with Small Bay operators requesting increases on 10 October 2022 and 3 November 2022. The Task Team presented the proposed allowable infrastructure increases for the ADZ and each farm at the November 2022 AMC meeting (held 24 November 2022).
- After assessing the Operator requests, the AMC took a decision (on 24 November 2022) to increase the bivalve production threshold further, to 15 000 tpa ungraded, in order to accommodate the economic demand to sustain aquaculture businesses.
- Individual Operators were notified of the AMC approved allowable infrastructure for their farm on 14 December 2022. In these notification letters and emails, Operators were also informed that the bivalve ungraded production threshold had been increased further to 15 000 tpa.

### **4. Beach clean-up efforts by Aquaculture industry**

- Beach monitoring for aquaculture debris and clean-up by the Aquaculture Industry is a requirement of the Environmental Management Programme (EMPr) for the ADZ (see Table 7-1, condition 1 and 2).
- The co-chairperson of the Bivalve Shellfish Association of South Africa (BSASA) presented beach clean-up efforts being undertaken by industry at the May 2022 AMC meeting.
- Small Bay beach monitoring and clean-up is co-ordinated by Imbaza Mussels on a twice-weekly basis.
- The Spreeuwalle beach (main receiving beach in Big Bay) is monitored and cleaned by Southern Atlantic Seafood Holdings (SASH) as they manage the majority of the farms in Big Bay.
- Outer Bay North beaches are also the responsibility of SASH as they manage the majority of farms in that precinct.

- Since September 2022, industry has been providing waste collection data as evidence of beach clean-ups. Evidence has been provided for clean-ups of Small Bay and Big Bay, but no evidence of clean-up efforts in Outer Bay North have been provided. This reporting needs to be improved in 2023.

#### **5. Auditing and other protocols developed over the reporting period:**

- Sue Lane and Associates conducted the annual external audit for year 3 of the Saldanha Bay ADZ. This report covered the period of 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2022. This audit report was made available to the AMC on the Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) on 5 April 2022.
- Emergency Response Protocol version 3 was developed and was distributed on 20 June 2022. This updated Protocol includes an Entanglement Guideline in response to an unfortunate entanglement and subsequent death of a whale in Outer Bay North in October 2021.
- Farm Monitoring Reports (FMR) are filled out by operators on a monthly basis. The FMR template was reviewed, updated, and the new version (4) was distributed to operators on 7 April 2022.
- The Environmental Management Programme (EMPr) was reviewed, taking into consideration the external annual audit report for year 3. Version 4 was produced and distributed to the AMC and CF on 15 July 2022.
- NCC Environmental Consultants have been appointed to conduct the annual external audit for year 4 and will cover the audit period 1 February 2022 to 31 January 2023.

#### **6. SAMSA Aids to Navigation surveys and marker buoys**

- The South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) conducted an audit of navigational aids associated with the ADZ in December 2020. The results found that the Aquaculture Development Zone is not suitably marked with SAMSA approved navigational aids (marker buoys and flashing lights).
- SAMSA has developed an Aids to Navigation (AtoN) plan for Saldanha Bay and the AMC has been involved throughout the process of developing this plan.
- The final AtoN plan was provided to the AMC on 18 November 2022 and discussed at the 29<sup>th</sup> AMC meeting (held 24 November 2022). Since this report is still in draft form, it has not yet been shared with the wider stakeholders.
- A Navigational Risk Assessment on how the activities will affect shipping and navigation will need to be conducted by SAMSA with the inputs of all relevant stakeholders prior to the implementation of the AtoN plan and installation of marker buoys in Saldanha Bay by the Transnet National Ports Authority.
- It is anticipated that the Risk Assessment will be undertaken in 2023.

#### **7. Pepper Bay Task Team**

- As reported in the 2021 AMC annual report, Operators had been conducting a practice of cleaning crates and baskets of biofouling on the wooden jetty at Pepper Bay. Not only is this practice environmentally unsound, but it contravenes a variety of legislative requirements.
- In response, the AMC established the Pepper Bay Task Team (PBTT) to review the cleaning practices conducted by operators and legislative requirements. Furthermore, the PBTT were to develop legally sound alternatives for biofouling removal.
- The PBTT inception meeting was held on 11 February 2022 and the Terms of Reference were agreed to and circulated for comment on 15 February 2022.
- A joint compliance inspection was undertaken by DFFE: Compliance and Monitoring and DFFE: Fisheries Management in March 2022 and operator Coastal Water Discharge Permits were inspected. After this inspection the PBTT reported that an increase in compliance was observed.

- The PBTT convened on 22 November 2022 with the ECO chairing the meeting. It was concluded at this meeting that the action items from the previous PBTT meeting (held in February 2022) overlapped with requirements of various other existing committees.
- The PBTT decided to direct the outstanding items to the relevant parties and committees (e.g., Small Harbour Master, Development of EMPs for Small Harbours, Harbours Committee, etc.) and a vote to disband the PBTT was taken and carried unanimously.

## 8. Consultative Forum

- Four Consultative Forum (CF) meetings were held in 2022 on 7 February, 5 May, 4 August, and 3 November 2022. All CF meetings in 2022 were held virtually on MS Teams.
- Poor Operator attendance of the CF meetings had been raised as a concern during 2021. This was reflected at the first CF meeting of the 2022 year, which was attended by only two Operators (of 10 attendees).
- However, attendance by operators improved over the course of 2022, and 8 Operators (of 17 attendees) attended the last CF meeting of 2022 held on 3 November 2022.

## 9. Site specific Environmental Management Programmes

- No new or updated site specific EMPs were provided for endorsement to the AMC during 2022.

Yours sincerely

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**AMC Co-chair**  
Western Cape Department of Agriculture

Mr Ferdie Endemann

**DATE:**

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**AMC Co-chair**  
Department of Environment and  
Development Planning

Ms Mellisa Naiker

**DATE:**