



MEDIA STATEMENT

MINISTER BARBARA CREECY LIFTS TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF EXPLORATORY OCTOPUS FISHING IN FALSE BAY

08 NOVEMBER 2019

The Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, Ms. Barbara Creecy has approved the lifting of the temporary suspension of the exploratory Octopus fishery in False Bay with effect from 15 November 2019.

The department had placed a temporary ban on the exploratory octopus fishery on 28 June 2019 following concerns over entanglements and mortalities of whales in octopus fishing gear.

The decision to lift the suspension comes after consultations with the scientific community and stakeholders in the fishery through the New Fisheries Scientific Working Group. These included SanParks, University of Cape Town, Nelson Mandela University, the South African Whale Disentanglement Network and the Department's Fisheries, Oceans and Coast and Branches.

During consultations, whale entanglement data was presented, as well as cetacean behavioral and biological information. The bulk of the consultation focused on gear configurations and possible improvements to reduce whale entanglements. Amongst the mitigation measures that were explored were special sinking lines with extra weights, acoustic release buoys or time release buoys to minimise the need for vertical lines.

The lifting of the temporary suspension is subject to the immediate implementation of mitigation measures through the permit conditions for this fishery. Mitigation measures to be implemented include:

1. The bottom line should consist of entirely of sinking ropes.
2. The chain on the buoy line must be move from the top of the line to the bottom.
3. There must be sheathing of the top 2 metres of the buoy line with PVC piping/tubing.
4. The buoy must mounted on the bottom with a timed released mechanisms.

The Working Group further recommended that within three months should there be two or more entanglements of the southern right whale or the humpback whale, the fishery should be halted or terminated. Again, should there be at least one entanglement of the bryde's whale the fishery should be terminated or halted. Should there be at least one mortality of any of these whales, the fishery will be terminated.

The above mentioned conditions will be introduced incrementally in other areas of octopus fishery. The department is looking at introducing mitigation measures on other fishing gear that has resulted in whales entanglements and/or mortalities.

“It is imperative that this fishery and all the parties involved do everything possible to ensure, not only the success of the fishery, but also the wellbeing of the environment in which the fishery operates,” said Minister Creecy.

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