



C.A.P.E. ESTUARIES PROGRAMME

Estuaries

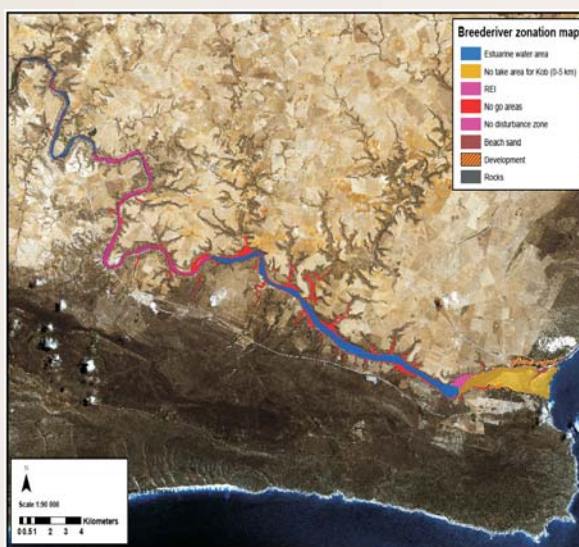
NEWSLETTER OF THE C.A.P.E. ESTUARIES PROGRAMME

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*Our estuaries are beautiful, rich in plants and animals,
they attract visitors, sustain our livelihoods and uplift our spirits*

The C.A.P.E. Estuaries Programme was developed to ensure the conservation and sustainable utilization of the estuarine biodiversity in the Cape Floral Region. The programme follows a strategic, integrated approach to estuarine management. The programme is the first of its kind in South Africa and perhaps internationally, and will be a test case for the incorporation of strategic decision making into estuarine management.

To pilot the strategic concept, a generic estuarine management plan (GEMP) has been developed in accordance with the guidelines of the proposed Protocol: as outlined in the National Environmental Management : Integrated Coastal Management Bill. To test the applicability of the GMP six pilot sites: Olifants; Klein; Heuningnes; Breede; and Knysna were selected for the development of individual EMP.



Zonation Plan: an example of the zonation plan in the Breede estuary that will allow and limit certain activities in the estuary (map: T Bornman).



Getting started: First stakeholders meeting for the Breede and Heuningnes estuaries.

Importance and management of estuaries

Estuaries form transitional zone between sea and land . It is here that freshwater, draining from the land mixes with salt water from the sea creating a unique habitat that is rich in animal and plant life. South Africa has approximately 255 functional estuaries.

These provide essential support to our coastal marine fish stocks, with many key species being wholly or significantly dependent on estuaries. In 2002, it was estimated that the total value of estuarine and estuary dependent fisheries to be approximately R1.3 billion. Consequently, the loss of estuarine function could have a negative economic value on inshore fisheries.





Traditional fishing: North-east - Kosi Bay should be sustainable.



*Modern use:
KZN Harbour*

The habitat provided by estuaries also support human activities, ranging from the traditional subsistence fishing practises in northern KZN to industrial ports. The non-consumptive use of marine and estuarine resources has big potential for people to benefit whilst having a much lower level of impact on the environment than consumptive uses. Simple things like boat trips (with the type of boats being appropriate to the ecological situation) enable people to enjoy nature closely, and together with related activities, constitute a variety of business opportunities with resultant job creation. Catch and release fishing also has a much lower impact on resources than other fishing and is becoming popular amongst many serious anglers.

Management of Estuarine Fishing became the responsibility of MCM (DEAT) with the approval of the "Marine Living Resources Act" of 1998 which included "tidal rivers and lagoons" in its area of applicability. This lead to changes in management responsibility, and initially, in a number of cases, a drop off in the effectiveness of management, as local and provincial authorities (and even SANParks) were less able to continue with what they regarded now as an "unfunded and uncertain mandate".

At the same the Act allowed for access of subsistence fishers to estuarine resources (and a new policy still needs to finalized following extensive public consultation) for this is currently open for public comment). Nevertheless commercial fishing activities in estuaries remained banned as before.

The new Coastal Management Bill requires the development of a "National Estuarine Management Protocol" which will set procedures and standards for the drawing up of individual estuarine management plans, and their implementation. These plans will allow for effective zoning of estuaries to accommodate appropriate uses - as well conservation in terms of national and regional priorities. This approach resulted largely from the Water Research Commission's Eastern Cape Estuary Management Programme.

Similar pilot initiatives are planned KZN and the Eastern Cape . Watch this space!!.

What can I do to protect my estuary?

Every South African has the opportunity to do something towards improving the health of our rivers and estuaries by joining local estuarine forums or forming one. This provide platform to learn more about your estuary and know important species that need to be protected.

For more information contact Marine and Coastal Management @ 021 402 3634 / 3307
or CapeNature @ 021 866 8000.

*An estuary is the report card of its catchments -
Anonymous*



*Sustainable use:
Canoe guides paddling fly fishers across the
Mngazana Estuary*

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