

Information Pertaining to the Proposed Aquaculture Development Zone in Saldanha Bay / (as summarized by Save Langebaan Lagoon)

The proposed ADZ forms part of Operation Phakisa (Oceans Economy).

In June 2016 the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) appointed the consulting firm SRK Consulting to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) with regard to the proposed development

Originally an area of 1872 hectares was evaluated , this included previously approved mussel culture zones of 468 hectares. This leads to an additional expanded area of 1404 hectares. In June 2016 the first stake holders were identified and consulted with regards to the proposed ADZ and the additional areas..

By February 2017 the 1st BAR (Basic Assessment Report) by SRK was release to the public as part of the public participation process. In this report the new recommended area totals 884 hectares. It is important to note that that is only a recommendation by the consultants to DAFF; they could still wish to utilize the full 1872 hectares.

At present the total area of mussel and oyster farming comprises an area of 152 hectares (125 ha in Small Bay & 25 ha in Big Bay).

The current recommendation is 884 hectares, of which the Big Bay precinct will consist of 367 hectares of mussel rafts & mussel longlines. 42 hectares will be finfish cages.

The ADZ will be broken up into different sectors with different areas being leased out to various companies. Some companies are already in operation in the mussel and oyster industry and are looking to expand their production. There are a few new companies applying for lease areas to farm Bivalves (mussels and oysters).

The lease areas will be leased by Transnet Port Authorities .This is one of the key issues as to why the ADZ is in Saldanha Bay and Langebaan Lagoon. The 884 hectares of zoned areas fall within the legal boundaries of the Port Authorities, in essence within the “port waters “. The applicant farmers will be signing 10 to 15 year leases, thus securing fixed revenue for these parastatals.

Regarding the Finfish cages:

The most likely company to hold the 42 hectares lease agreement for the finfish cages is Molapong Aquaculture, this is a division of Viking Fishing. They are the company running the current test model out in the bay (six cages). The test phase is to confirm survival of fish, sustainability , water quality monitoring etc. Molapong has an independent environmental consulting company conducting their EIA , the company is Ecosense.

The fish to be farmed will be Atlantic salmon and Rainbow trout, i.e. not indigenous to South Africa. A phased in approach has been recommended, whereby for the first year a maximum quota of 1000 tons per annum of fish will be harvested. Once it is established that the water quality will not be impacted and other factors have not affected the health of the bay, an increased production over next 5 years will be 5000 tons per annum. (The average fish at harvest weighs between 2 and 3 kg ; so if you harvest 5000 tons of 3kg fish that = 1 666 666 fish / 1.6 million fish ; that is a lot of food and a lot of fecal matter).

Regarding Bivalve farming (mussels /oysters/ abalone)

At present the total area in Big Bay being farmed is 25 hectares, the proposal is to expand this to 367 hectares. That is 14,6 times the current size. Basically an area of 3.6 km x 3.6 km situated 1 km off Paradise Beach.

The infrastructure will be mussel rafts (plank platforms / 1 raft with 800 droppers per hectare) or longlines (barrels floating in long line formation 11 longlines per hectare / 832 droppers per hectare).

Response from the public

In the initial phase only a few “ stake holders “ were identified and informed of the proposed development. They were government sectors , San Parks , Langebaan and Saldanha Municipalities and certain water sport associations and business. E.g. Yacht Clubs and Marinas, Club Mykonos , Sailing South Africa and businesses already operate in the aquaculture sector and the Military. These organizations were given opportunity to register as IAPs (Interested and Affected Party) and could give input. Although a small group , they did ensure that a large portion (517 hectares in Big Bay South / section in front of Mykonos beach and Calypso Beach) was “ scrapped “.

It is important to note that no effort was made to inform the home owners associations at all. The notice placed in the Weslander by SRK Consulting on 9 June 2016 to advertise the proposed project and subsequent posters placed, is the extent of effort on their behalf to create awareness. Once the BAR was released in February 2017 and available to the public for viewing at the library and Municipality, word did get out. Had it not been for a big driving awareness campaign started by a group calling themselves Save Langebaan Lagoon , very few people would know about the project.

Since mid February until mid June , Save Langebaan Lagoon has managed to place 3 adverts in the Weslander, More than 50 Posters around Langebaan, 2000 flyers , started a face book page and held a “ beach day “ to raise further awareness. To date 1200 people have registered as IAP in opposition and a further 1360 have signed petitions (771 hand signed & 929 online) the online petition is growing.

There are a few strong opposition stake holders who have lodged strong written arguments.

The issues of concern that have been addressed are:

Environmental impact

Socio-economic impact (on the town of Langebaan)

Visual impact

There is great concern from:

Water sport sector, real estate and property developers, local small business owners relying on tourism , environmental organizations, small scale fishermen and some existing mussel farming operations.

Points raised have been, how tourism will be affected, who are the potential lease holders and what experience do they have. A VERY GREAT CONCERN is the question everyone wants answered: “ who is responsible when it goes wrong ? “ . Will the department of Environmental Affairs , the department of Forestry and Fisheries, Transnet Port Authorities or the individual lease holder be held accountable for the damage to the environment and subsequent degradation of the lagoon and damage to the tourism and lifestyle sector ? Or will nobody be held responsible after potential failure due to storms, algae blooms, mismanagement or incompetence? Where will the money come from to FIX what is destroyed ? Most projects start with great intentions and assurances but the follow up and management of DISASTERS has a poor track record in South Africa.

For Example: Vaal Dam , acid mining water in Gauteng, iron ore dust pollution Saldanha Bay.

SRK Consulting will submit its final BAR (Basic Assessment Report) together with all comments received by IAP's and stakeholders to DAFF. DAFF will submit this to DEA for evaluation and consideration. Should it be granted there is a 20 day appeal period.

Save Langebaan Lagoon Action Group as well as the Langebaan community are determined to protect the lagoon from this impending disaster .