MEDIA STATEMENT

6 November 2013

For immediate release

WEST COAST ROCK LOBSTER TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH (TAC) ANNOUNCED

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) has announced the TAC for the West Coast Rock Lobster (WCRL) 2013/2014 fishing season today, Wednesday, 6 November 2013. The global WCRL TAC for the fishing season is set at 2 167.06 tons.

Speaking at a media briefing earlier today the Deputy Director-General: Fisheries Management (Acting) Desmond Stevens, reasserted the DAFF’s commitment to the implementation of the WCRL operational management plan aimed at the recovery of the resource.

“Noting the 2012 Status of the South African Marine Fishery Resources report which indicates that WCRL is showing signs of recovery, the Department, under the leadership- and with full support -of Minister Tina Joemat-Petterson, remains steadfast in our unwavering commitment to manage South African Fishery resources in ecologically sound manner based on proven scientific principles. We are also committed to contribute in rebuilding our coastal communities through their daily struggles in making dignified livelihoods through fishing”, Stevens said.

The Department will achieve this by balancing the diverse and sometimes contradictory interests of different users of the country’s marine resources, such as the west coast rock lobster resource. Over the last few months the Department endeavoured to restore predictability in its policy making and allocation of fishery resources regime Stevens continues.

The department and the all relevant fishery stakeholders have collectively developed the WCRL Operational Management Plan (OMP) with a clear accumulative recovery target of 35% for West Coast Rock Lobster by 2021. “We are determined to achieve this target to ensure the sustainability of this important fishery sector for the benefit of both present and future generations.

Through sound scientific and management practises we have therefore set the global TAC at 2 167.06 tons for this 2013/2014 season in support of the recovery target. In the difficult economic circumstances and the many challenges faced, this decision by the department to pursue the
recovery target is welcomed by WWF and carries the unanimous support of all the WCRL user sectors,” Stevens explained.

The global TAC for the previous season was set at 2426 tons.

The apportionment of the WCRL TAC for the season has been determined following an extensive consultation process with all the affected and relevant sub-sectors in the WCRL sector. Numerous consultations were held with the sub-sectors which include the commercial off-shore, the commercial nearshore, the subsistence (small-scale/interim relief), and the recreational fishing sub-sectors. These consultations were done individually as well as collectively, and also included several written representations.

“This was not any easy task and the department believes the following apportionment is the most equitable compromise it could reach.

The TAC apportioned to the commercial offshore sub-sector is set at 1 356.56 tons and for the commercial nearshore sub-sector it is set at 451 tons. The TAC apportioned for the subsistence (small-scale/interim relief) sub-sector, is set at 276 tons (138kg per fisher).

Explaining the rationale for the apportionment, Stevens said “the TAC apportionment for the nearshore commercial has been kept at same level as the previous season. The TAC apportionment for the offshore commercial has been set at between 12-15% lower than the previous season. The TAC apportionment for the subsistence (small-scale/interim relief) has been set at 276 tons. During the past five years the fishers had been steadily receiving a smaller proportion per individual. The original allocation was 320kg per fisher, then 167kg and currently the apportionment is 138kg per fisher, which represents a reduction of 43.13%. It must be noted that these three sub-sectors are the cornerstone of creating jobs and livelihoods in the west coast rock lobster fishing sector of our fishing economy”.

The apportionment for the west coast rock lobster recreational fishing sub-sector remains unchanged at four west coast rock lobsters per person per day for the duration of the fishing season. The effort or the number of fishing days for the the 2013/2014 recreational fishing season, has been determined at twenty-six days. The 2013/2014 west coast rock lobster recreational fishing season opens on 15th of November 2013 and closes on the 21st of April 2014. Fishing will be allowed every day of the week from 15 November 2013 to 17 November 2013. No fishing will be allowed from 18 November 2013 to 13 December 2013. Fishing will be allowed every day of the week from 14 December 2013 to 1 January 2014. No fishing will be allowed from 2 January 2014 to 17 April 2014. Fishing will be allowed on public holidays from 18 April 2014 to 21 April 2014.
The size restriction remains at 80mm carapace length.

Recreational fishing permits will only be issued to persons above the age of 12 years.

Recreational permit-holders collecting and landing of west coast rock lobster may do so only between 08h00 – 16h00. The rock lobsters must be landed by 16:00.

Any west coast rock lobster caught, collected or transported shall be kept in a whole state. West coast rock lobster caught with a recreational permit may not be sold by any person.

Recreational west coast rock lobster permits are obtainable at the Post Office at a cost of R92, 00 per permit and are valid for the entire recreational fishing season. The permit fees remain unchanged.

Enquiries and comments from recreational fishers can be directed to RECRFISH@nda.agric.za, a dedicated email address created by the Department specifically for the purposes of improved communications with the recreational fishing sector.

The Department remains committed to the recovery plan and has never veered therefrom. Neither does the Department has any such intentions. ‘We believe the use of the resource should be in the interest of sustainable development which recognizes the environment, people, and economics’, asserted Deputy Director-General, Desmond Stevens.

Contact Carol Moses on 021 4023448
CarolMO@daff.gov.za

www.daff.gov.za
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