



MEDIA STATEMENT

MINISTER BARBARA CREECY GRANTS SMALL SCALE FISHERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE ACCESS TO FISHING

13 NOVEMBER 2019

Small-scale fishers of the Western Cape have for the first time been granted access to fishing during the 2019/20 west coast rock lobster season as part of the transition to the new small-scale fishing sector.

This was announced by the Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, Ms Barbara Creecy, following a series of stakeholder workshops with fishing communities in the Western Cape.

“There was a general call for interim relief fishers to continue fishing for the next season and for fishers on the declared small-scale fishers list to be granted access to fish,” said the Minister adding that, in considering the requests from communities, the Department had been instructed to fast-track the roll-out of the small-scale fisheries sector in the province.

The Department was also directed to provide a transition from the current interim relief arrangement to a permanent and more structured small-scale fisheries sector in the Western Cape.

Minister Creecy says that it is imperative for small-scale fishers to be granted access to fishing while they are waiting on their 15-year fishing rights to be allocated. These 2 749 fishers were declared for the first time in 2018 as small-scale fishers as part of the roll-out of small-scale fishing sector in Western Cape. Minister Creecy also noted that the current interim relief dispensation will continue taking into account that some interim relief fishers have already signed contracts for the West Coast rock lobster 2019/20 fishing season. As a form of transition, the department has amended the interim relief lists to include fishers who have been declared small-scale fishers to be part of this last interim relief dispensation. Interim relief fishers and small-scale fishers will equally share the west coast rock lobster allocation allocated to them for the West Coast rock lobster 2019/20 fishing season.

During the Minister’s engagements, concerns were also raised about caretakers in the interim relief dispensation exploiting fishers.

“It is for this reason that in preparation for the West Coast rock lobster 2019/20 fishing season there will be no caretakers,” said the Minister.

All fishers will be required to sign a letter of authorisation drafted by the Department on the amended interim relief list for 2019/2020 fishing season. Interim relief fishers are to nominate an individual who will execute specific and spelled-out tasks on behalf of Interim Relief (IR) fishers. On signing, each fisher is given an opportunity to indicate which marketer they have signed with. This will also allow

fishers who have not signed a contract to choose who they want to market their products without being influenced on the choice of marketer.

The person authorised by the majority of fishers in a community to assist interim relief fishers will be able to assist in the completion of permit and license application forms, collating all the necessary supporting documents required by the Department, and ensuring that fishers do not sign more than one contract at a time. Among other responsibilities, the authorized person will also have to ensure that each fisher is able to exercise their right to enter into a contract with a marketer of their choice, submit completed permit and vessel application forms to the Department; sign landing slips and, if necessary, nominate additional fishers to assist with signing of landing slips against IR community's permit; and assist any fisher with any information relating to the permit such as total of fish landed, information about export permits, and the like.

One of the many challenges raised by fishers was that the Western Cape small-scale fishers list did not include all small-scale fishers in the province and in that the process was not fair. As a result of the unhappiness among fishers about the final list of the declared small-scale fisher in the Western Cape Province, Minister Creecy appointed BDO auditors and advisory firm to conduct an investigation of the small-scale fisheries registration and verification process, as well as the final list of small-scale fishers for Western Cape Province.

Following the receipt of the preliminary findings of the probe, the Minister is considering the appointment of an independent panel to review the appeals of all unsuccessful applicants, and for it to provide a revised list of fishers who can be declared as additional small-scale fishers to the Minister for a decision.

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