

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT:

Project Definition and BA Process for a Proposed Sea-Based Aquaculture Development Zone in Saldanha Bay

SRK Project Number: 499020

1 INTRODUCTION

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) aims to develop and facilitate aquaculture (the sea-based or land-based rearing of aquatic animals or the cultivation of aquatic plants for food) in South Africa to supply food, create jobs in marginalised coastal communities and contribute to national income. Saldanha Bay is a highly productive marine environment and has an established aquaculture industry, with potential for growth.

DAFF proposes to establish a sea-based Aquaculture Development Zone (ADZ) in Saldanha Bay, Western Cape to encourage investor and consumer confidence, create incentives for industry development, provide marine aquaculture services, manage the risks associated with aquaculture and provide skills development and employment for coastal communities.

SRK Consulting (Pty) Ltd (SRK) has been appointed as the independent consultant to develop a framework for the Saldanha Bay ADZ and undertake the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process required in terms of the National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998, as amended (NEMA) and the EIA Regulations, 2014.

This Background Information Document aims to:

- Provide a brief motivation and description of the project;
- Briefly describe the affected environment;
- Describe what is involved in the study and the EIA process; and
- Provide information on how stakeholders can participate.

See page 4 for details on how you can participate in the process.



2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND MOTIVATION

Operation Phakisa was launched in 2014 to unlock the economic potential of South Africa's oceans through innovative programmes that bring together many stakeholders to plan major economic projects. Aquaculture was identified as a key priority of Operation Phakisa, as it is considered a sustainable strategy to contribute to job creation and South African Gross Domestic Product.

Saldanha Bay presently supports a number of aquaculture operations, such as mussel and oyster farms. DAFF has determined that the carrying capacity of the Bay can support additional production. To facilitate investment and development of additional aquaculture in the Bay, DAFF proposes to establish and obtain Environmental Authorisation (EA) for an ADZ in Saldanha Bay, incorporating:

- Sea-based aquaculture, including the potential farming of bivalve (mussels and oysters), abalone, finfish and seaweed; and
- Land-based support activities, such as processing and holding facilities, hatcheries and laboratories.



Figure 1: Aquaculture in Saldanha Bay

3 THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Saldanha Bay is located on the semi-arid West Coast of South Africa, in the Western Cape, approximately 120 km north of Cape Town. The Port of Saldanha is the main iron ore terminal in South Africa. A number of other vessel types, primarily oil tankers, also frequent the port.

Saldanha Bay supports many economic activities including a major aquaculture industry as well as numerous recreational activities. In addition, tourism is an important income stream in the area. A number of industrial operations are located in the area, including the ArcelorMittal steel plant, Tronox smelter and a number of fish processing plants. The Saldanha Bay Industrial Development Zone (SBIDZ) has been established at the back of the port and is South Africa’s first dedicated development in the Oil & Gas Services and Marine Repair Cluster to support Upstream

Exploration & Production developments in the West and East African regions, and potentially the South African market.

Saldanha Bay falls within the Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve. Langebaan Lagoon, located south of and connected to Saldanha Bay, has been declared a RAMSAR wetland of international importance. Langebaan Lagoon forms part of the West Coast National Park located south of Saldanha Bay. Freshwater is scarce and the marine environment is regarded as sensitive.



Figure 2: (Partial) View of Saldanha Bay

4 APPROACH TO THE STUDY

The study consists of two components:

- Project Definition, which commenced in May 2016 and is led by Capricorn Marine Environmental (CapMarine); and
- Basic Assessment (BA) Phase, which commenced in June 2016 and is led by SRK.

The Project Definition Phase and BA Phase are partly conducted in parallel (see Figure 2).

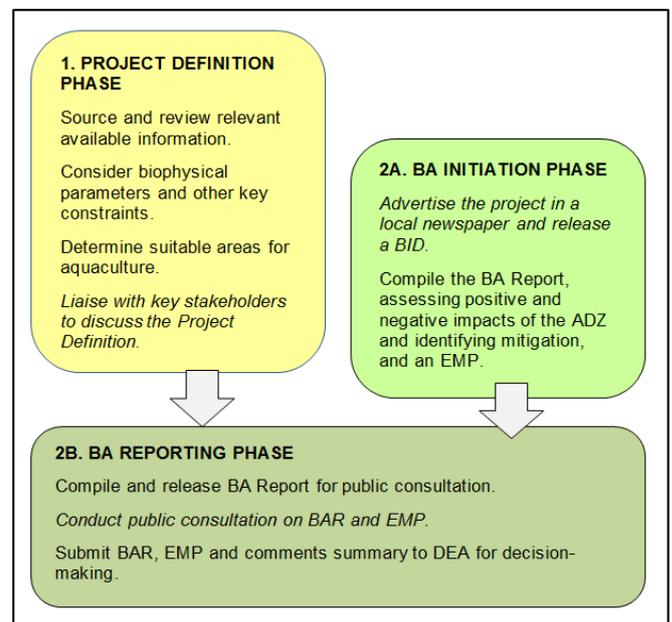


Figure 2: Approach to the study

5 PROJECT DEFINITION PHASE

The Project Definition Phase aims to identify areas for potential aquaculture expansion across Saldanha Bay, including Inner Bay, Outer Bay and North Bay, as well as different species, culture options and infrastructure requirements.

The analysis utilises existing information obtained from key stakeholders (including DAFF, Transnet and the local aquaculture industry), published sources and previous studies and considers a range of factors such as depth, swell and water quality conditions as well as other current or proposed uses of the Bay.

GIS software will be utilised to analyse various aspects and layers of spatial information to develop a map of the potential ADZ.

The outcomes of the Project Definition phase will be discussed and vetted with key stakeholders in meetings and / or workshops prior to the BA process.

6 BASIC ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In terms of Section 24 of NEMA, an application for EA must be submitted to the competent authority for activities listed in the EIA Regulations, 2014, promulgated in terms of Section 24(5) of NEMA, and authorisation obtained prior to the commencement of those activities. Listing Notices (LN) 1-3 in terms of NEMA list activities that require EA (“NEMA listed activities”).

Activities listed in LN 1 and 3 require a BA process, while activities listed in LN 2 require Scoping and Environmental Impact Reporting (S&EIR, also referred to as a “full” EIA).

Although the ADZ still remains to be defined, it is likely that the proposed ADZ will trigger some or all of the listed activities presented in Table 1, requiring a BA process.

Aquaculture is excluded from LN 2 activity 14, relating to the development of any structure or infrastructure on, below or along the sea bed¹.

¹ (Land-based associated) support facilities that require a permit or licence in terms of national or provincial legislation governing the generation or release of emissions, pollution or effluent, for example a Coastal Waters Discharge Permit, may have to undertake a separate authorisation and permitting process once sufficient information is available on such facilities. This falls outside of the scope of this study.

Table 1: Listed activities potentially triggered

No	Description (<i>abbreviated</i>)
Listing Notice 1 (requiring BA)	
7	The development and related operation of facilities, infrastructure or structures for aquaculture of sea-based cage culture of finfish, molluscs and aquatic plants of more than 50 000 kg per annum.
8	The development and related operation of hatcheries or agri-industrial facilities outside industrial complexes with a footprint of 2 000 m ² or more.
42	The expansion and related operation of facilities, infrastructure or structures for aquaculture of sea-based cage culture of finfish, molluscs and aquatic plants with an increase of more than 50 000 kg per annum.
Listing Notice 3 (requiring BA)	
13	The development and related operation of facilities for aquaculture on the estuarine side of the development setback line or an estuarine functional zone, a protected area or an aquatic critical biodiversity area.
24	The expansion and related operation of facilities for aquaculture on the estuarine side of the development setback line or an estuarine functional zone, a protected area or an aquatic critical biodiversity area.

Before commencing with the project, the proponent (DAFF) is thus required to appoint an independent Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) to undertake a BA process and to obtain authorisation in terms of NEMA from the competent authority. The competent authority for projects where the applicant is a state department is the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA).

An overview of the BA process proposed for this project is shown in Figure 3.

The aims of the BA process are to:

- Notify stakeholders of the proposed development (and BA process);
- Provide stakeholders with the opportunity to participate effectively in the process and identify relevant issues and concerns;
- Ensure that stakeholders’ issues and concerns are addressed in the assessment and are accurately recorded and reflected in the BAR;
- Assess the potential positive and negative environmental impacts associated with the proposed activity; and
- Make recommendations as to how the potential negative impacts can be effectively mitigated and the benefits enhanced.

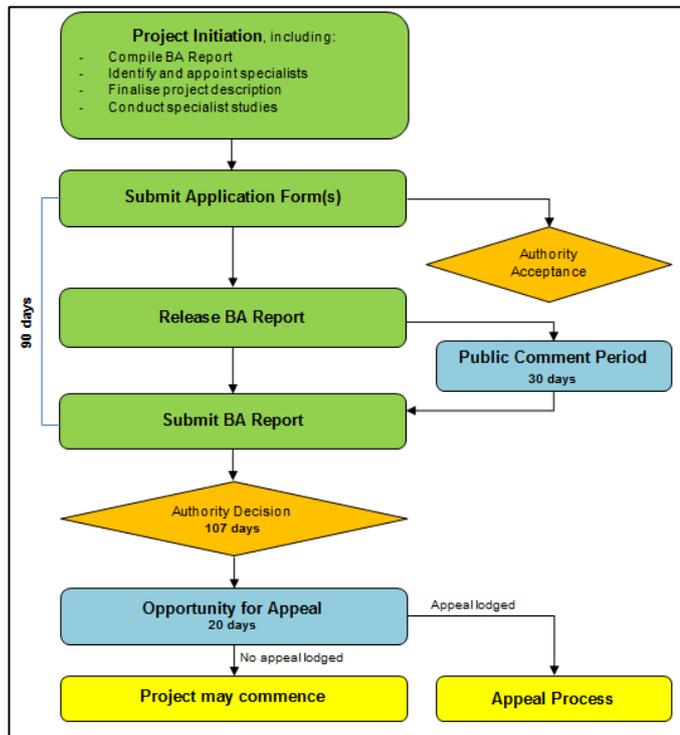


Figure 3: Simplified BA Process Diagram

Specialist input on the following aspects is currently envisaged to inform the BA Report:

- Marine Ecology;
- Socio-economics;
- Heritage; and
- Visual.

Consultation with the public and authorities forms a critical part of the BA process and is intended to provide all stakeholders with opportunities to raise issues and concerns that should be addressed in the BA process and to comment on the documentation submitted to DEA.

SRK plans to conduct a thorough consultation process that makes provision for public meetings as well as focus group meetings, if required.

As part of such consultation, the BA Report will be released for public comment (in ~August 2016).

HOW YOU CAN YOU PARTICIPATE IN THE BA PROCESS

We value your input into the Project Definition Phase and BA process. Stakeholders are invited to register on the project database and/or submit initial comments. Please note that only registered stakeholders will be notified when the documents are made available for comment as part of the BA Process.

REGISTER OR PROVIDE YOUR OPINION

Register or send written comment to:

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Please refer to the SRK Project Number in your submissions. If registering as a stakeholder, please provide your name, contact details (preferred method of notification, e.g. email), and an indication of any direct business, financial, personal or other interest in the application.

