



SOUTH AFRICA



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TOWARDS HEALTHY OCEANS AND RESILIENT LIVELIHOODS FOR COASTAL COMMUNITIES

SMALL-SCALE FISHING ZONES – FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE

South Africa's small-scale fishing (SSF) sector is the latest marine fishing sector to be formally established.

Since 2012, the government has legally recognised the traditional dependence of community-based fishers on marine resources as a source of livelihood and food security. The SSF sector is also the most vulnerable among all fishing sectors. In most coastal communities, there is a lack of alternative job opportunities and access to secondary education. Fishers rely heavily on already depleted marine resources to eat and earn a living. Plus, community fishers often have limited access to markets and competition with other user groups. Without positive interventions, this situation is expected to deteriorate, especially given that our oceans and coastal ecosystems are also facing unprecedented threats.



>170

SMALL-SCALE FISHING CO-OPERATIVES
HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED SINCE 2023

Co-operative are legal entities with 15-year fishing rights under South Africa's Small-Scale Fishery Policy

Small-scale fishing zones (SSFZs) present an exciting opportunity for small-scale fishers to engage in the co-management of their natural resources at a local level. In an SSFZ, small-scale fishers will be able to prioritise actions to support their livelihood and sustain their fishing tradition.

WHAT IS A SMALL-SCALE FISHING ZONE?

A small-scale fishing zone (SSFZ) is a designated marine area established to prioritise small-scale fishing practices, thereby empowering and protecting coastal communities' livelihoods.

Although SSFZs are provided for in the Marine Living Resources Act 18 of 1998 (MLRA) they remain mostly conceptual. Practical steps to create them are being developed. Regulation 5(3) relating to small-scale fishing read in conjunction with section 17 of the MLRA – allows

the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment to limit/prohibit any other rights in a demarcated SSFZ.

SSFZs will be implemented through a co-management framework, with small-scale fishers working in partnership with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) and other relevant stakeholders to co-manage the area and its resources.

KEY COMPONENTS OF A SMALL-SCALE FISHING ZONE



Preferential access

Fishing access for small-scale fishers at the local level, towards sustaining coastal communities' livelihoods.



Co-governance

Fishers participate in decision-making at the local level, relating to the management of the zone and natural resources.



Co-management

Inclusive management of the small-scale fishing zone, together with DFFE and other important stakeholders.

WHAT IS LIKELY TO BE NEEDED FOR THE MINISTER TO DEMARCATATE SMALL-SCALE FISHING ZONES?

- ✓ Proposed GIS coordinates of the zone
- ✓ Key threats to be minimised
- ✓ An established local governance structure with a terms of reference recognised by DFFE
- ✓ Gazetting of draft SSFZ and associated management plan for public comment.

WHAT ARE THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SMALL-SCALE FISHERS?

Small-scale fishers are central to the success of an SSFZ. Their active participation ensures the zone is functional, fair and sustainable. Their roles include, but are not limited to:

- **Co-management/co-governance and leadership:** Play a leading role in the co-management structure, representing community interests and contributing to day-to-day management decisions and actions.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Act as key liaisons between the community, government authorities and other relevant stakeholders.
- **Monitoring and compliance support:** Work with compliance officers and authorities to report illegal activities, poaching or other threats to the small-scale fishing zone.
- **Rules and regulations:** Participate in developing and reviewing management measures such as seasonal closures, gear restrictions and potential no-take areas, drawing on local knowledge and scientific advice.
- **Planning livelihoods:** Guide decisions on appropriate alternative or diversified livelihood activities to ensure they are sustainable, culturally appropriate and community-driven.

WHAT ARE POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PEOPLE AND NATURE?



Small-scale fishers

- Meaningful participation in decision-making around marine resources
- Protection of small-scale fishers' culture and traditions
- Improved income security and reduced conflict with other stakeholder groups

The marine environment

- Reduced resource pressure through regulation of other activities
- Improved collective efforts in looking after the health of our oceans
- Healthier oceans over time.



WHAT IS THE VALUE OF A SMALL-SCALE FISHING ZONE?

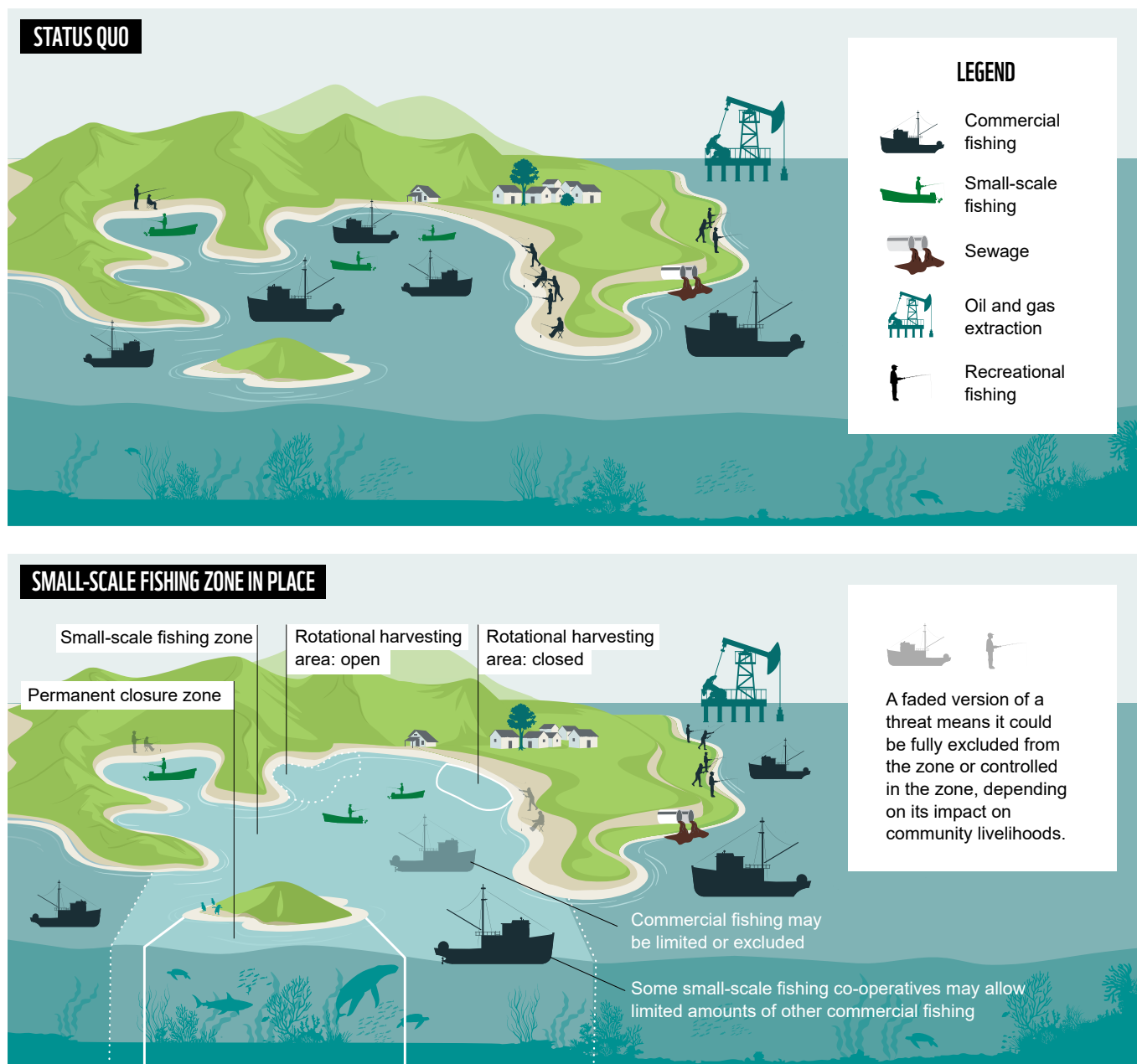
Formalising SSFZs enables a more inclusive approach to the governance and management of local marine areas, thereby allowing small-scale fishers a stewardship role in managing resources. The clearly designated zones promote priority access to marine resources for small-scale fishers, helping them secure their livelihood. In turn, this should improve the socio-economic resilience of historically marginalised coastal communities.

The SSFZ also provides a platform for integrating empirical, scientific information and local knowledge to support the sustainable management of marine resources. SSFZs can be used to protect important marine biodiversity and attributes at a local level. If these zones conserve marine biodiversity, then local knowledge and participation can support the long-term health of our oceans.

Importantly, if these zones can be successfully established, they hold exciting potential to be recognised as an "OECM" - other effective area-based conservation measure – a powerful tool for meeting socio-economic and conservation goals.

With an urgent global focus on reducing rapid biodiversity loss, governments have committed and are working towards conserving 30% of the world's land and ocean by 2030. This is Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), commonly referred to as "30x30" target. Target 3 promotes securing and improving biodiversity abundance. 30x30 calls for a more complementary, inclusive and affordable approach that can balance livelihoods with conservation. Recognising marine OECMs, such as SSFZs, is an effective mechanism for co-managing areas to benefit coastal communities and the environment, while contributing towards 30x30 to secure marine biodiversity.

SMALL-SCALE FISHING ZONE CONCEPT



Source: WWF South Africa

Figure: Example of a small-scale fishing zone in comparison to the status quo

WHAT IS WWF DOING?

WWF is striving to build resilient coastal fishing communities through implementing coastal and marine ecosystem restoration pilot projects in partnership with various communities and organisations.

WWF works with willing coastal communities in priority areas to help establish and coordinate co-operatives and support them in identifying sustainable activities that enhance the local biodiversity while benefiting the communities and their livelihoods.



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