



environment and tourism

Department:
Environmental Affairs and Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



THE VALUE OF THE COAST

Sustainable Coastal Livelihoods Programme

The coast is a unique part of the environment, a meeting place of the land and sea - a limited spatial area that supports a multiplicity of human activities, and that contributes enormous economic and social benefits to the people of South Africa. The coast is a distinctive, complex and interconnected natural

system, with resources that are finite and vulnerable to overuse and degradation, and that pose risks when not well managed. Maintaining the diversity, health and productivity of our coast is central to realising and sustaining the economic and social benefits it provides.

Definition of the Coast

Our coast is thus a distinct, but limited spatial area that gets its character mainly from the **direct interaction** between land and sea (and associated air masses). Surrounding this area of direct interaction are areas of **indirect influence**, extending from inland mountain catchment areas to the exclusive economic zone and beyond. The coast can be defined as an area with a landward and a seaward boundary that includes:

- **Coastal waters**, which extend from the low water mark into the sea, up to the point where these waters are no longer influenced by land and land-associated activities;
- The **coastline or sea shore**, which is the area between the low and high water marks;

- **Coastlands**, which are inland areas above the high water mark that influence or are influenced in some way by their proximity to coastal waters (these areas may stretch many kilometres inland to a maximum of 50kms).

The "coastal zone" is defined in the draft Coastal Management Bill, which will become an Act of Parliament once approved, as consisting of:

- a Coastal public property;
- b The coastal buffer zone;
- c Coastal access land;
- d Coastal protected areas; and
- e Any aspect of the environment on, in and above coastal public property, the coastal buffer zone, coastal access land or coastal protected areas.

The South African Coast

Our coast extends for about 3 000 km from the Orange River on the western border with Namibia to Mozambique in the east. It links the east and west coasts of Africa and connects our continent to the Indian, Atlantic and Southern oceans. South Africa has one of the highest coastal population densities in Africa - about 81 people per square km, compared to the average African density of 55 per square km. It is currently estimated that 30% of South Africa's population lives within 60km of the coast.

The coast is very diverse, in terms of its biophysical setting, natural resources, social setting, human settlement patterns, and economic, institutional and legal setting. The social and economic components of

the coastal system depend on the health and productivity of the biophysical component. Throughout the ages, the coast has been valued as a social place, a site of economic activity, as well as for its biodiversity.

Much of the coastline is under stress from exploitation at sea and on land, in the latter case notably due to the drive for recreational and residential use. Our coast is the route by which most of our exports and imports move, as well as the site of major industrial, recreational and residential activity. Because of this diverse character of our coast, it is clear that varied management responses are required at the provincial, regional and local levels, which need to be guided by the policy on Sustainable Coastal Development.



Promoting Sustainable Coastal Livelihoods

Under Apartheid the full value of the coast could not be experienced, appreciated and valued in the same way by all South Africans. In recent years, serious attempts to shift policy have been made by the current government to give access to the majority of South Africans to the benefits and value of the coast. In 2000 the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) launched a White Paper on Sustainable Coastal Development. To implement the White Paper a Sustainable Coastal Livelihoods Programme (SCLP) has been undertaken by DEAT with support from the British Department of International Development (DFID). A part of the SCLP is the implementation of sustainable coastal livelihoods projects along the coast towards:

- Coastal **economic development** that makes the best use of available resources;
- Coastal development that promotes **social equity** through improved livelihoods of poor coastal communities; and
- A **healthy coastal environment** for the benefit of current and future generations.

The aim of these projects is to encourage the sustainable use of natural resources towards improving local communities' quality of life, without compromising the availability of those resources for future generations. It is the hope that in the long-term these shifts in policies will lead to the more sustainable management and use of the coastal resources.

Recognising the Value of the Coast

Our coast provides immense benefits to the people of South Africa. The estimated value of the **direct benefits** obtained from all coastal goods and services in South Africa is about R168 billion annually (White Paper, 2000). **Indirect benefits**, for example, ecosys-

tem services such as erosion control and waste treatment, contribute a further R134 billion annually. In addition to direct and indirect benefits, to which a value can be given, our coast has significant **aesthetic, cultural educational, scientific** and **spiritual value**.

Economic Value of the Coast

Until the 1970s, the Gauteng area was the fastest growing region of South Africa. Since the 1980s, however, this trend has changed. Economic growth is now fastest in the four major coastal cities - Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban, as well as coastal centres such as Richards Bay, Mossel Bay and Saldanha Bay. The coast should therefore be recognised as a key engine for future economic development in South Africa. Direct economic benefits that come from the coast include¹:

- The South African **fishing industry**, estimated to be worth about R2.4 billion every year, plus the value of secondary industries such as fish processing, boat building and transportation of fish products;
- The attractive lifestyle, recreational and tourism opportunities offered by a coastal location. **Coastal tourism** is estimated to generate R13.5 billion for the South African economy every year;
- South Africa's ports and harbours link our country to the world. The **coastal shipping industry** generates R4.2 billion every year.

Indirect economic benefits from the Coast include¹:

- **Erosion control** by coastal features such as dunes

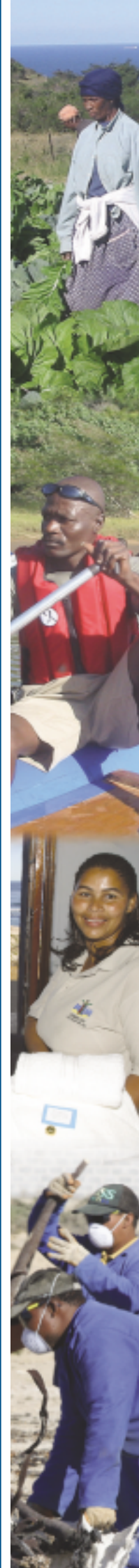
and high cliffs which protect the coastal environment (including roads, buildings and farmlands) from the damaging effects of waves and wind. This natural form of erosion control is estimated to be worth R715 million;

- **Waste** assimilation, detoxification and recycling by coastal wetlands, forests and grasslands is estimated to be worth R4 billion;

Coastal ecosystems are capable of sustaining more than one activity at the same time. For example, Cape Town's Victoria & Alfred Waterfront supports a busy harbour, attracts tourists and shoppers, and serves as a port for the commercial fishing industry.

The economic opportunities that are offered by the coast depend on a high quality coastal environment. A key element of the White Paper is revaluing and reconverting traditional productive activities that conserve natural resources, while introducing new productive opportunities that preserve the environment while increasing equitable access to coastal resources. Our valuable coastal assets and future development opportunities will be lost unless we maintain a healthy coastal environment.

¹ Extracts from "Our Coast for Life", National Marine week, 2000





The Social Value of the South African Coast¹

The coastal areas of South Africa have a great cultural, historical and spiritual significance in the development of our nation. Millions of South Africans and international tourists are attracted to our varied coastal environments. Our coast also provides vast educational and scientific opportunities. What would South Africa be without beaches and the associated oppor-

tunities for recreation and leisure they provide? Our coast impacts on the mental health of people as many people see it as a spiritual place where one can reflect and reconnect. We need to ensure that all South Africans have access to the refreshment and rejuvenation of a visit to the coast.

The Biophysical Value of the Coast

The eastern shores of our country are washed by the warm waters of the Agulhas Current, while the west coast is washed by the cold, nutrient rich waters of the Benguela Current that are drawn up from the deeper regions of the sea. These currents, and related factors such as water temperature, climate and geographic location, influence the distribution of plants and animals along the coast and ensure a rich marine and coastal biodiversity. For example, the Havaan dry coastal dune forest, located just 17km north of Durban's city centre, is a pristine climax forest consisting of over 150 different tree species

compared with the whole of Europe where there are just over 75 different tree species.

The warm waters of the east coast support a high number of marine species, while the west coast has fewer species but supports large populations of certain species, such as deep-sea hake and sardines. In excess of 11 000 marine species have been recorded around South Africa. This number represents 5% of the total number of marine species that have been recorded around the world. Of the 11 000 species, approximately 17% occur nowhere else on earth.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Without a comprehensive monitoring system, it would be difficult for government and the broader community to keep track of the condition of coastal resources. As part of its commitments in the White Paper on Sustainable Coastal Development, the government is in the process of compiling a State of the Coast report in partnership with the Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) with a set of clear marine and coastal indicators that would in its completion phase serve as a good measure to assess in which ways the value of the coast by all stakeholders could be enhanced. The purpose of these State of the Coast reports are to provide information on:

- The **current condition** of the biophysical environment;
- Trends of **changes** in the biophysical environment;
- The key **driving forces** of these changes;

- The **implications** of these trends; and
- What societal **response** to these changes should be.

DEAT is developing an information system (based on coastal indicators) to support decision-making and reporting on the coastal environment at national, provincial and local levels in South Africa.

Our coast is a special national asset that should be planned for and managed in the long-term public interest. All South Africans, particularly organs of State, have a responsibility to recognise the immense value our coast affords - economic, social and biophysical, and to ensure that its use is planned and managed in the public interest, ensuring its sustained value and benefits to all the communities of South Africa.

For further information on the value of the coast, contact:

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¹ Extracts from "Our Coast for Life", National Marine week, 2000