

Minister Barbara Creecy updates on measures taken in the sector during national lock-down

03 April 2020

In previous communication, we outlined an extension with regard to fishing permits. Today we outline provisions that allow commercial and small-scale/interim relief fishers in the Northern and Western Cape to take advantage of the snoek run in the Northern Cape.

Accordingly, fishers in the Northern and Western Cape may travel within the provinces to catch snoek in what is known as Zone A. At all times, fishing teams must adhere to prescribed hygiene provisions, such as sanitising of hands, sanitising the insides of vehicles and equipment. Restrictions on the number of passengers in vehicles must be observed at all times.

In compliance with the existing regulations, accommodation will not be opened in fishing villages and so fishermen will have to only concentrate on fishing in areas where they can move in and out within a single day. We understand that this might not be convenient, but we are trying to make sure that the snoek run, which is very important for household food security in the Western and Northern Cape people, will benefit communities, but at the same time ensure they are observing the regulations.

Fishers must at all times carry their exemption notices and permits issued to small-scale and interim relief fishers with them. Fishers may not interact with local communities. They may only operate within the harbours which are closed to all other members of the public.

The Langana will need to be permitted by the municipalities, as explained by my colleague the Minister of Small Business Development. We also have indications that the commercial sector is prepared on request from small fishers, to buy, transport, process and market catches from small-scale and interim relief fishers.

Our work in the forestry sector continues to play a significant role in addressing basic needs during this lockdown period. This includes the production of essential goods like pulp for toilet paper and personal hygiene products, as well as the production of plywood board or pellets for material linked to packaging in the fruit and pharmaceutical industries.

To ensure that fires do not destroy forests and vegetation, and also do not threaten livelihoods particular in rural areas, our Working on Fire ground and aerial teams remain active for the rest of the summer season in the Western and Eastern Cape.

Ground and aerial resources in the Western Cape and in the Sarah Baartman District of the Eastern Cape, which are nearing the end of their summer fire season, continue operations as normal. 32 teams are on duty in the Western Cape, and six in the Eastern Cape. Working on

Fire's aerial capacity for the summer fire season includes three AT802 Bomber aircraft, 11 Spotters and 10 helicopters.

We have had to adjust some of this programme's operational procedures to minimise, and mitigate, any health risks to its employees, while ensuring that fire teams will be able to assist their partners in case of wild fires, and other fire incidents.

The teams that operate in the northern region where we have the winter fire season are stationed at home and they remain on standby for the beginning of the fire season in that area.

We also wish to inform all participants, principle investigators and support teams of the arrangements pertaining to the forthcoming Marion Island 2020 relief voyage. It will now depart in the last week of April 2020.

As a result of the lockdown and as per announcement of the President, the voyage planning and arrangements have to be reconfigured to minimise risks. We have taken decisions which we believe are in the best interest of existing participants and the overwintering team, which we need to return from Marion Island to South Africa.

To this end, the Department, together with key partners and specialist advisors, has decided that the voyage will proceed, but with a significantly reduced vessel crew and expedition complement. The expedition will include an essential support team for logistics, maintenance and overwintering. There will be no field science activities during the relief and overwintering periods.

The Department is facilitating quarantine and testing of all voyage participants. These would include personnel from the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, SA Weather Service, SA National Space Agency, as well as our helicopter crew.

This decision was not taken lightly and should not be construed as a lack of priority assigned to the scientific activities. However, we do believe it is essential to return the existing expedition from Marion Island as soon as possible and to put in place a team that will look after the base until such time as we are able to return to full scientific activity on the island. Parties who will be participating in the voyage will be contacted either directly or through their respective focal points.

The other issue that I would wish to address is the collection of recyclables which have not been included in essential service list. The consequence of this is that the waste pickers cannot continue working under lockdown. Accordingly, we do find that there are hundreds of waste pickers who are currently experiencing situations of extreme hardship.

Following consultations with the two main Waste Pickers' Associations, we have taken a decision to submit a proposal for relief to the National Solidarity Fund. In the interim, to alleviate hunger, we have approached the Consumer Goods Council and its members who are in the process of discussing an intervention that will see the provision of food parcels to waste pickers as soon as possible.

With regards to animal care and wildlife management, we, throughout the week, have been checking with zoos and sanctuaries on a regular basis to ensure that animals are cared for and fed. With regards to the unfortunate incident in the Bloemfontein Zoo, we can report that we have worked with the NSPCA to evacuate all animals to alternative licensed sanctuaries. The exception is the buffalo that are being fed at the zoo until such time that we establish their TB status in terms of the existing regulatory framework.

Ranger services and anti-poaching activities continue in all our national parks and we can report that last week we had a successful anti-poaching operation – one the 26th of March – that resulted in arrests on the Eastern boundary of the Kruger National Park and poaching equipment confiscated.

It is also important to highlight that the planned United Nations Climate Change COP26 that was set to take place in Glasgow in November has been postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Dates for a rescheduled conference in 2021, will be communicated in due course following discussion with parties. Our work on the review of our country's NDCs to reduce greenhouse gases, and the development of our climate change response strategies with municipalities and provinces, continues.

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