



South Africa: EBSA Status Assessment and Proposed Zoning and Management

*Minutes from the National EBSA Working Group Meeting
Cape Town, 12 February 2020*

Meeting report

The meeting was attended by 30 participants from various institutions and industries. Stephen Kirkman gave a brief welcome and presented the background to the MARISMA Project, EBSA process and the EBSAs. Since the previous National EBSA Working Group meeting, there was a proposal to change the name of two of the EBSAs: *Cape Point to Cape Agulhas*, and *Secret Reef, Kingklip Ridge and Kingklip Koppies*. Kerry Sink spoke through the motivation to change these names to *Seas of Good Hope* and *Kingklip Corals*, respectively. The former change is to align with the name of the proposed marine World Heritage Site that adopted the EBSA boundary; the latter change was to simplify the complex name, and to focus on the key sensitive features that link the three key features (Secret Reef, Kingklip Koppies and the PE Ridge) and underpin the EBSA status (vulnerability and sensitivity; importance for threatened species and habitats; uniqueness and rarity). There was a question regarding the presence of corals within the latter and Kerry Sink confirmed the presence of deep-water coral at all 3 localities within the Kingklip Corals. There were no objections to these name changes, and so they were adopted, and the network updated accordingly (Figure 1).

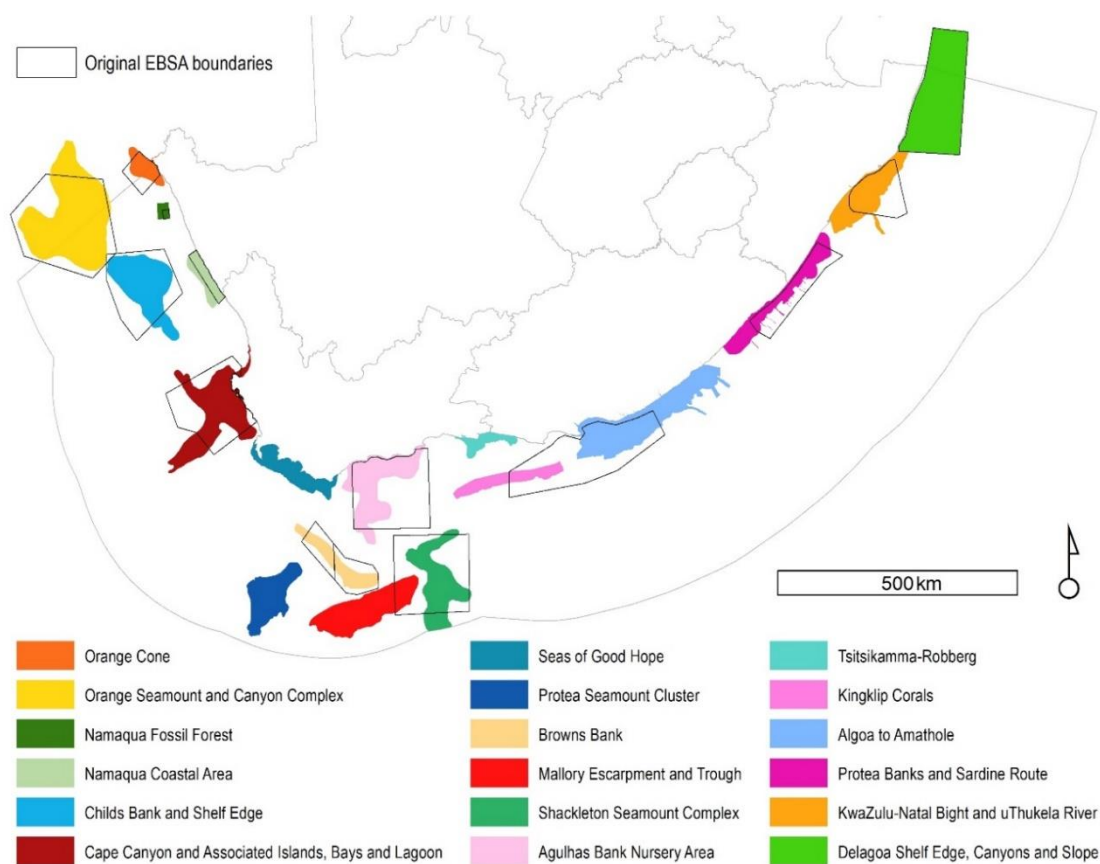


Figure 1. South Africa's EBSA network, including new EBSAs and the revised extent of the existing EBSAs in relation to the boundaries of the original network.

Stephen Holness then presented the science behind the delineations and boundary refinements, giving opportunity for clarifying the process that has been followed, especially for new participants in the meeting. The original EBSA Network was based on the focus areas from the Offshore Marine Protected Area (OMPA) Project (based on an analysis in Marxan) and inputs from national and regional workshops held at that time. An updated spatial prioritisation (also run in Marxan) based on new data (e.g., bathymetry, ecosystem types, ecological condition) identified additional priority areas that were evaluated against the EBSA criteria and were found to meet them. The iterative refinement of the boundaries focussed on aligning with the latest map of marine ecosystem types (as advanced through the National Biodiversity Assessment 2018), where possible and appropriate, and thus more closely fitting the EBSA delineation to the features that underpin the EBSA status (e.g., seamounts, canyons, reefs, threatened ecosystem types, etc).

Linda Harris presented the updated EBSA status assessment results, and refinement of the proposed EBSA zoning based on the Critical Biodiversity Areas Map (CBA Map), where the refinements were to: make the zones follow lines of latitude and longitude; reduce conflict with existing activities; reduce artificial “conflicts” caused by data analysis methods; simplify the zones by eliminating small conservation zone areas, if possible; add in newly derived priorities for Algoa Bay; revise in light of the new results from NBA 2018 (especially for the highly threatened (CR, EN) and Not Protected ecosystem types; and to undo strong avoidance of high-intensity shipping. It was clarified that the CBA Map that underpins the EBSA zoning is based on a new systematic biodiversity prioritisation run in Marxan (largely based on the NBA 2018 ecosystem types and assessment results), from which irreplaceable and near-irreplaceable sites are identified, as well as other areas that are important for meeting biodiversity feature targets that direct the identification of CBAs (EBSA Conservation Zone) and ESAs (EBSA Impact Management Zone). After updating the EBSA zones as described above, these will be fed back into the evolving CBA Map to ensure that there is one single “biodiversity ask” in the MSP process. Following this technical background, the details of the zones per EBSA, the associated management recommendations, and what the feasibility of implementation might be based on an analysis of activity overlaps in each zone was presented by Stephen Holness. There was much interactive discussion around some of the EBSAs.

Matters arising through the meeting

- The **EBSA boundaries have been dynamic** over time, which has made it difficult for consultants to use the boundaries. The iterative refinements were part of the consultation process and alignment with the NBA 2018 as the data became available. The current revised EBSA boundaries are stable and the shapefile is available for download from the EBSA portal. The zonation within the EBSAs, however, is still in the refinement stage, and these boundaries are (unavoidably) not yet stable.
- The question of the **legal status of EBSAs** was raised. In South Africa, EBSAs have no legal status. Even though South Africa is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity, there are no legally binding commitments to any management actions within EBSAs. Rather, at COP10 in 2010, the CBD *encouraged* governments to cooperate to identify and adopt appropriate conservation and sustainable-use measures in EBSAs. Management within EBSAs is proposed to be formalised through the MSP process.
- Concerns were raised over the **stakeholder consultation process for the EBSAs**, including at the local level of individual fishing communities. It was pointed out that EBSAs have been shared through a series of open meetings and data portals, but that it was beyond the scope of the EBSA

project to undertake any specific local stakeholder engagement. Stakeholder engagement on zoning / spatial planning decisions will be done through the MSP process, under the leadership of DEFF, and with the involvement of all applicable departments. All sectors were encouraged to lobby their respective government departments to ensure that the engagement process is robust and that their views are heard. Moses Ramakulukusha provided an overview of the current state of work within the National Working Group for MSP, including plans for stakeholder consultation and roadshows.

- Concerns were raised over the perceived risks and potential **socio-economic impacts for industries operating within EBSAs**. Every effort has been made to avoid conflict and accommodate existing uses. Further negotiations around trade-offs between biodiversity protection and industry economies will take place through the MSP process, also recognising that one of the primary objectives of Operation Phakisa is to grow the oceans economy, as well as protect South Africa's biodiversity heritage. Stephen Holness emphasised that the EBSA process is a scientific exercise to systematically identify important ocean areas at a regional scale using the criteria provided and the management aspects need to be independently consulted and advanced through MSP.
- It was recommended to include **local communities and indigenous knowledge** in both EBSA delineation and EBSA zoning/management. This is fully recognised, and where relevant, has been listed as a research priority in the full EBSA document. Engagement with local communities is more appropriately done at local scales, and is also envisaged to be part of the MSP process, where any required revisions to the zone boundaries or recommended regulations can/will be undertaken.

Issues to be addressed or noted in the next iteration of the EBSA zoning and management recommendations

- Change "Mining" in the regulations to "Mining and prospecting".
- Change "Oil and gas activities" to "Oil and gas exploration and production" to be clear that it does not include bunkering.
- Bunkering needs to be added as a separate activity, and include recommendations for oil spill contingencies in the "additional actions" section.
- Add "Telecommunications infrastructure (cables)" as an activity. (Linda to contact Andrea Pulfrich for data)
- Move "Naval ammunition dumping" to a separate box in the table called "Historic activities, no longer active" and should be "Prohibited".
- Clarify coastal development and coastal disturbance: the footprint of these *below* the high-water mark is within the jurisdiction of MSP; the portions that will fall under ICMA etc are the portion of the footprint *above* the high-water mark.
- Consider revising "Prohibited" to "Incompatible".
- Estuaries will be part of the MSP process. However, management recommendations are not provided for estuaries within EBSAs because it is expected that the MSP process will respect and reflect the management requirements as specified in the respective estuary management plans.
- In the full document, do "overall" feasibility graphs, i.e., for all activities across all EBSAs, showing what proportion is in each of the management categories.
- Consider adding non-consumptive activities in the tables and looking for synergies with tourism (e.g., shark cage diving, whale watching, etc)
- Explore inclusion of the octopus fishery in Seas of Good Hope EBSA.

Way forward

1. Descriptions

The revised EBSA descriptions will presently be submitted to Oceans and Coasts and, if sign-off occurs in time for the descriptions to be considered at the next SBSTTA meeting, may be presented CBD COP later this year.

2. EBSA Zones

Linda Harris to update the website for people to engage with the zones and provide feedback via an online form. The zones will be revised again and presented at a follow-up workshop, along with updates to the status assessment document. There will probably be several iterations.

3. MSP Process

The current task is to complete the Initial Status Quo document. In the next financial year, sector plans will be developed that cover the next 10-20 years, with engagement including a roadshow for stakeholders and a website. The first spatial plan is envisaged to be completed by the end of 2023 for the South African south coast.