Invitation to Information Sharing Session:

**Marine Spatial Biodiversity Priorities as an input for Marine Spatial Planning**

_Taking Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas zoning and management recommendations and Critical Biodiversity Areas Map and sea-use guidelines into planning and decision-making processes_

Interested persons are invited to attend a national information sharing session on 22 October, 13h00 – 16h00. The session will be virtual, and we will send access details to all confirmed participants.

The information-sharing session follows up on a national Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA) workshop held at Kirstenbosch in February 2020. Updated status assessments, draft zones and management recommendations, the alignment with marine Critical Biodiversity Areas and the integration of EBSA information into Marine Spatial Planning, were discussed at the workshop. This session continues with, and expands on, this process.

Importantly, we need to recognize that EBSA zoning and management recommendations do not take place in a vacuum. Recommendations have potential consequences for industries and users of marine space and resources. Further, there is a complex arena of different but related concepts, processes and acronyms (EBSA, CBA, ESA, MSP and MPA) that require thorough clarification.

We recognize the need to be transparent and open in our engagement with stakeholders. This is particularly important given that some processes such as the timelines and nature of the stakeholder process for MSP have not yet been decided.

The session will include:

- Launch of the National Coastal and Marine Spatial Biodiversity Plan: Map of Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBA Map) and Sea-Use Guidelines V.1
- Overview of the science underpinning the approach, with a focus on relevant components of the National Biodiversity Assessment 2018.
- Introduction to the range of place-based protection mechanisms in a marine context (zoning, sector specific regulations, Marine Protected Areas and Other Effective Conservation Measures).
- Explanation of the proposed process of moving from spatial priorities and management recommendations (i.e. the EBSA zoning and management recommendations, CBA map with sea-use guidelines), to presenting a refined spatial case to the Marine Spatial Planning process to be secured via zoning and Other Effective Conservation Measures, and which could also be used to inform planning for potential protected area expansion.
  - Overview of proposed process
  - How the environment sector is engaging in the Marine Spatial Planning process to secure appropriate marine zoning and other place-based mechanisms.
  - Feedback on initial industry engagements on the EBSA zoning (and management recommendations) and CBAs (with sea-use guidelines).
  - Lessons from Phakisa: How a robust and iterative stakeholder engagement process is necessary to secure implementable Marine Protected Areas
- Q&A session for pre-submitted questions

If you would like to attend the workshop, please RSVP by 15 October 2020 by clicking here. This will open an email to Lieze Swart (lswart@environment.gov.za), and cc both Stephen Kirkman (skirkman@environment.gov.za) and Linda Harris (linda.harris@mandela.ac.za), with “Information sharing session” as the subject line. Registration details will follow. You are welcome to raise any initial questions for the session in this email.

More background is below, and a draft agenda shall be circulated closer to the time. This is an open session, and you are welcome to forward this invitation to other colleagues who might be interested in attending the session. The session will be virtual, and we will send access details to all confirmed participants.

**Background**

EBSAs are areas of the oceans that have special ecological properties. EBSAs are identified and described under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) through a technical and scientific exercise on the basis of a set of seven scientific criteria. For South Africa, 18 areas meeting the EBSA criteria have been previously identified through CBD processes. The descriptions of these EBSAs have been formally endorsed by the CBD Conference of the Parties (COP) in October 2014.

The German-funded project “Marine Spatial Management and Governance (MARISMA)” of the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem (BCLME) is supporting the Benguela Current Commission (BCC), its three member states (South Africa, Namibia and Angola) and other key stakeholders in the marine management sector to reach the objectives of the Benguela Current Convention regarding enhanced sustainable management and governance of the BCLME’s marine biodiversity and natural resources. The main focus of the project is capacity development at various levels, to implement and institutionalize Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and to identify and describe the BCLME’s Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs). The MARISMA project includes the development of management and governance strategies, policies as well as legal and institutional frameworks, which relate to and are conducive for EBSAs and MSP. It supports partners in implementing measures for their application and coming-into-force.

In terms of EBSAs, the project supports the continuation of the EBSA process in the BCC member states by focusing on the following:

- Description and verification of areas meeting the EBSA criteria
- Assessment of the vulnerabilities of areas meeting the EBSA criteria
- Management recommendations for EBSA (especially inclusion into MSP)

The first step is to describe new EBSAs and/or revisit the existing EBSA descriptions to verify/add to them. The technical process of doing this has been conducted by a consortium of researchers led by Dr Stephen Holness of the Institute for Coastal and Marine Research, Nelson Mandela University, who were appointed in terms of the MARISMA project. They have worked closely with national EBSA task teams and in South Africa have provided regular updates to, and received feedback from, the National Marine Biodiversity Scientific Working Group.
In July 2018, input on the process was provided by an international team of experts at a regional EBSA working group meeting held in Luanda, and comments and suggestions from that workshop were incorporated and presented at a national workshop held in October 2018 at the Kirstenbosch Research Centre. Further revisions to EBSA descriptions were proposed at this workshop and have since been incorporated. Also, an overall approach to the status assessment and the development of draft EBSA zones and suggested management requirements was agreed at this workshop. Progress on these were presented and discussed at another national workshop in May 2019, including presentation and review of proposed EBSA zoning (Conservation or Impact Management zones) that were developed using a systematic approach, and aligned with another spatial management tool namely marine Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBA) which were under development. Input from this workshop contributed to the development of the marine biodiversity input into the MSP process for the EBSAs, which was initially presented and reviewed at the February 2020 workshop.

For further information, visit https://cmr.mandela.ac.za/EBSA-Portal/