



forestry, fisheries & the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 3040 {NW3502E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 22 OF 2025

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Mr W D Peach (DA) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

- (1) Whether, with reference to the gaps in the data supplied in his reply to question 1409 on 29 October 2024 and the report by the International Union for Conservation of Nature on the status of some of the shark species caught in nets and drumlines (details furnished), the specified permit renewals have been assessed in terms of their effect on threatened populations; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what (a) are the relevant details and (b) action has his department taken to ensure that permits for Bathing Protection Programme do not threaten the sustainability of the threatened population;
- (2) whether his department will provide data for the 25-year period that was unaccounted for in the specified reply to compliment the partial data already supplied so that a fuller and independent analysis can be completed; if not, why not; if so, (a) on what date will the specified data be supplied and (b) what are the relevant details;
- (3) whether, in light of the threatened nature of the species being targeted as well as non-target incidental mortalities and also his department's approach which is for minimising mortalities, his department will introduce amendments to permit renewals to include a condition that (a) prescribes a maximum quota for threatened species, (b) calls for the deployment of non-lethal technologies and (c) bans problematic gear deployments;
- (4) what total number of (a) target and (b) cetaceans and/or non-target species were killed during the specified period;

- (5) whether, given the high post-release mortality of sharks and other animals that often succumb to stress and lactic acid build up, the entangled animals were tracked after being freed to accurately reflect survival; if not, what measures were put in place to account for the specified risk; if so, what are the (a) details of the total number of animals including the types of species that were successfully released in each year during the specified period and (b) other relevant details?

3040. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

- 1)a) As outlined in Parliamentary Question 1409, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) considers a range of factors, including environmental, social, and economic aspects, when assessing applications for permit renewals.

In the case of permits issued for scientific investigations and practical experiments, the DFFE evaluates the progress, outputs, and duration of the research undertaken during the permit period.

Similarly, for standing permits issued under the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, 2004 (Act No. 10 of 2004), and in accordance with the Threatened or Protected Marine Species Regulations, 2017, the DFFE assesses the annual report submitted. This report details the species encountered during the Bather Protection programme, including the number of individuals and release rate of live specimens. These factors are key considerations in determining whether a permit is eligible for renewal.

- b) The permit issued to the KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board (KZNSB) for the Bather Protection programme is actively monitored by the Directorate: Oceans and Coasts Compliance. In addition, the DFFE oversees the implementation of the permit through the regular review of progress reports submitted to the relevant permitting units within the Branch: Oceans and Coasts.

A working agreement is in place between the DFFE and the KZNSB, stipulating that no new bather protection installations will be authorised for deployment in additional areas. The DFFE continues to emphasise the importance of bather safety education and the prioritisation of alternative, non-lethal technologies.

The monitoring of the existing bather protection programme, along with trial testing of alternative technologies such as the shark repellent cable developed by the KZNSB, is ongoing. This testing is aimed at ensuring that viable, non-lethal alternatives to shark nets can be implemented in the future.

To promote transparency and the exchange of knowledge, the KZNSB recently presented its work and progress at the 2025 Bather Safety Conference held in Réunion. The conference included discussions on the conservation of threatened marine species and the development of non-lethal protective technologies (refer to Annexure A).

- 2)a) The estimated date of provision is currently unknown. This is because a formal, written request detailing the purpose of access must first be considered by the KZNSB. While the DFFE receives annual reports on catches and activities undertaken by the KZNSB as part of the permit renewal process, it is important to note that data collected prior to 2017 may be subject to intellectual property considerations. These data were gathered under scientific permits issued in terms of section 83 of the Marine Living Resources Act, 1998 (Act No. 18 of 1998).

It is worth noting that summaries of catches and releases are publicly available on the KZNSB website.

- b) Catch and release statistics from 2013 to 2022 can be accessed via the KZNSB website: <https://shark.co.za/shark-and-harm-catch>.

While efforts may be made to engage the KZNSB for earlier data, doing so for periods prior to 2013 may place an undue administrative burden on the DFFE. Therefore, it may be more appropriate for such data requests to be directed to the KZNSB, given potential intellectual property considerations.

- 3)a) The KZNSB Bather Protection programme does not operate as a traditional fishery; rather, it is a public safety intervention aimed at reducing shark–human conflict at bathing beaches. Introducing a quota or upper catch limit would imply the removal of protective gear once the threshold is reached, thereby compromising public safety and beach access.

Many coastal municipalities rely on these deployments to support tourism and local economies by reducing the perceived risk of shark attacks.

- b) The DFFE continually encourages the review and testing of non-lethal bather protection technologies appropriate to South African conditions. The shark repellent cable developed by the KZNSB is currently undergoing testing.

While other non-lethal technologies, such as magnetic barriers and shark spotters, exist globally, they present limitations in the KZN context. Magnetic barriers have not demonstrated consistent effectiveness across multiple dangerous species or withstood the harsh coastal conditions in KZN. Shark spotters require high water visibility and are best suited to surface-dwelling species such as White Sharks; however, KZN waters are often turbid due to riverine discharges, and the primary risk species, namely Tiger Sharks and Bull Sharks, tend to swim deeper in the water column.

Smart drumlines, which reduce bycatch and improve release success, also remain under consideration, although their deployment is resource-intensive and operationally demanding.

- c) The removal of lethal gear will only be considered once a suitable, non-lethal alternative has been proven effective under local conditions. To date, no such tested and reliable alternative exists for the KZN coastline.

Discussions with international counterparts in Australia and Réunion, who also use a mix of lethal and non-lethal gear, have highlighted the complexity of transitioning fully to non-lethal technologies. These tools must still be tested for feasibility and effectiveness in the dynamic KZN coastal environment.

- 4)a) In addition to the information provided in Parliamentary Question 1409 and the response to Question 2 above, Annexure A1 contains detailed records of shark mortalities per type of bather protection gear deployed between 2022 and 2024, as reported annually.

- b) Similarly, Annexure A2 provides details of cetacean and other non-target species mortalities recorded per type of bather protection gear between 2022 and 2024, as reported annually (Annexure A2).

- 5)a) The KZNSB, in collaboration with research partners such as SAEON, participates in the Oceanographic Research Institute (ORI) tagging programme (<https://www.oritag.org.za>).

Animals tagged through this programme are sometimes recaptured by recreational anglers, which provides limited insight into post-release survival.

While post-release mortality is a known concern owing to factors such as exhaustion and injury, it is more commonly associated with recreational and commercial fisheries, where animals are actively caught and landed.

Refer to Annexures A1 and A2 for details of animals successfully released during the years for which the DFFE has records (Annexures A1 and A2).

b) None.

Regards



DR D T GEORGE, MP

MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE: 3/6/2025