

## Kreef industry turns red over new policy

**BOBBY JORDAN**

IT'S the end of an era for Kalk Bay, South Africa's oldest traditional fishing harbour, which as of this week no longer has a single inshore commercial kreef rights-holder.

Provisional new government fishing rights have grounded over 90% of the country's inshore kreef fleet, in preparation for community rights to be given to small-scale co-operatives.

These boats use hoop nets to catch the rock lobster, and are smaller than the offshore vessels that use crayfish traps.

Commercial rights-holders this week vowed to challenge the government's move, claiming their livelihood is at stake.

According to the latest rights allocations, only 75 out of 825 previous rights-holders were successful on the provisional list.

Elandsbaai, one of the country's kreef hotspots, now only has two inshore commercial rights-holders, and Hondeklipbaai just one.

The huge reduction comes against the backdrop of political pressure to implement the government's small-scale fishing policy, which seeks to give poor coastal communities a stake in the industry. However, critics question whether these communities have the capacity to manage and protect the fast-disappearing resource.

Conservation stakeholders including the Worldwide Fund for Nature are at loggerheads with senior officials over the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries' decision to disregard scientific recommendations to reduce the overall kreef catch by 34% for at least two seasons.

Concerns over the resource reportedly reached boiling point at a meeting late last month between WWF South Africa and fisheries boss Siphokazi Ndudane.

Several fishermen questioned the logic of achieving transformation by

transferring quotas to small-scale operators from the near-shore commercial sector, which is already more than 90% coloured or black.

"Most of the people who are affected are legitimate fishermen and women who are completely dependent on the resource for their livelihoods," said former Kalk Bay rights-holder representative Rob Andrew.

Another former rights-holder, Ivan Teichardt, said he had just invested about R56 000 in his boat. "I've been fishing since I was 14. I've got two grandchildren in high school — I have to support them. How can they just take people's rights away like that?"

The reduction in commercial quotas coincides with news that the Department of Public Works is moving ahead with a R400-million upgrade of the Western Cape's 12 proclaimed fishing harbours.

Fishermen say this could prove to be a waste, because fish stocks have declined so much. West Coast rock lobster has dipped to as little as 2% of pristine levels in some areas, and the species was recently red-listed (as endangered) by WWF's Southern African Sustainable Seafood Initiative.

Some stakeholders hope the small-scale policy might work, and provide a solution to the poaching of both kreef and abalone.

Serge Raemaekers, an expert from the University of Cape Town in small-scale fisheries, said the transfer of rights to small-scale operators was a sign that the government was taking its new policy seriously.

But he felt commercial rights-holders had been kept in the dark about the changes. "There was not enough communication that much of the near-shore would go to small-scale fishing."

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries did not respond to queries.

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