

The Lowdown of Lockdown. No Recreational Fishing for Months



It's true. The Post Office can sell you a recreational fishing permit, but recreational fishers are not allowed to fish under Level 4 lockdown regulations. Furthermore, the South African government has noted that fishing for recreation will be allowed again only when the country reaches Level 2 of lockdown. It also warns that these lockdown regulations could be in place for several months.

Flouting the regulations

This is inconceivable to some recreational fishers around the coast who don't see why they cannot fish, but interim relief and small-scale fishers can.

Some of these people think it's worth the risk to flout the regulations and various reports of people misbehaving are recorded. One such report is of three boats which are believed to have launched on Saturday evening through the Umzimkulu river mouth on the KwaZulu Natal south coast.

According to the report the SAPS Water wing managed to reach one of the boats which was instructed to return to shore. The owner received a R12000 fine, most likely more money than a load of fish would have returned. The owner of the second boat faces being arrested.

Risk to clubs

While this amount of money might be worth the risk to some fishermen, it is a bigger problem for clubs which could lose an agreement to manage a launch site.

To prevent any further confusion, the South African Deep-Sea Angling Association (SADSAA) put out a letter to all provincial associations, affiliated clubs and members at the end of April. It confirmed that all SADSAA angling tournaments have been cancelled for the remainder of the year.

Restrictions Fines

Recreational fishing club members have been asked again and again to be patient a bit longer. Disaster Management says that you can, and will, get a fine if found fishing and your fishing gear can also be confiscated.

The fine will be issued under the Disaster Management Act 27 of 2020 (as amended on 23/03/2020). It reads as follows:

- 11B(1)(a)(i) failure to confine oneself to his/her place of residence (first offence) R2500
- 11B(1)(a)(i) second offence R3500
- 11B(1)(a)(i) third offence R5000.

Some keep trying

Putting out a call for recreational fishing to resume, Andre Henn of ASFN fishing, is appealing to fishermen to register on its website's fishing poll, to motivate getting the ban lifted. Henn says recreational angling is justified to be reinstated for several reasons other than the fact that it is "not just the fun of fishing."

What the Department says

This is the most current statement seen from the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries:

"Furthermore, regarding Recreational Fishing, management is currently discussing the criteria that need to be in place before we lift the ban on recreational fishing. At the moment we are awaiting the regulations on exercises that will be permitted and the conditions thereof. This will provide us with a guide as to how to look at recreational fishing during this pandemic. So, there is no decision yet. The department will publish a notice once a decision is taken."