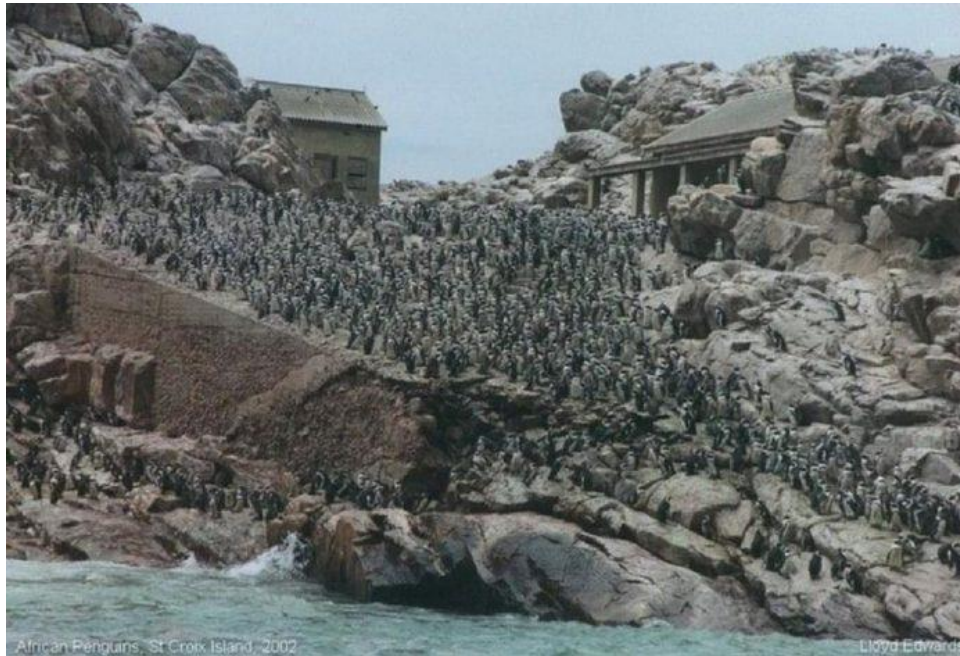


African Penguin Foraging Grounds Agreement for Algoa Bay.

By **FINSA reporter** 31 August 2023



St Croix Island penguin colony before it was deserted. A risk assessment for oil bunkering activities in Algoa Bay is currently underway. Photo: Stock

An agreement has been reached with the fishing industry about prioritizing foraging grounds for African Penguins in Algoa Bay.

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment has confirmed that an agreement has been reached between conservation groups and the East Coast small pelagic fisheries on limiting fishing in Algoa Bay

The conservation sector and the fishery industry representatives for the east coast small pelagic fisheries have reached an agreement on prioritizing areas for penguin conservation around St. Croix Island and Bird Island in Algoa Bay," says the Department's Minister, Barbara Creecy.

Conservation organisations are represented by Birdlife SÁ, WWF, the Endangered Wildlife Trust, and scientists from Nelson Mandela University.

Together with lead representatives from the Eastern and Southern Cape Pelagic Association (ESCPA) they have agreed to exclude fishing in 42.17% and 93% of core penguin foraging areas around St. Croix and Bird Islands respectively.

The agreed areas will be implemented from 1 September 2023.

Expert Review Panel report

According to a press statement, the penguin foraging areas in Algoa are characterized by relatively large ocean spaces.

“The report of the Expert Review Panel on fishing closures and limitations around key penguin colonies noted that the scientific evidence suggests that fish catches in closed areas will be more difficult to replace around the St. Croix and Dyer islands. These are some of the local characteristics that had to be taken into consideration during these negotiations,” says the statement.

Says the Minister, “The representatives from the various organisations are congratulated and thanked for their investment in offering compromise and reaching consensus.

“All representatives found common ground in prioritizing a healthy and sustainably-used Algoa Bay ecosystem. Such stakeholder-owned decisions are a first prize in environmental management and is welcomed.”

Colony-specific discussion

On 4 August, the Minister released the Report from the Science Review on information relating to the Small Pelagic Fishery and the African Penguin. The Report recommended that penguin colony-specific discussions take place as each colony has unique fishery and ecological dynamics, including that fish catch dynamics and replaceability vary at different colonies.

Fishing limitations have been established for the following penguin colonies: Dassen Island, Robben Island, Stoney Point, Dyer Island, St. Croix Island and Bird Island. These are to be implemented for a minimum of 10 years with a review after six years of implementation and data collection.

The transition to implementing fishing limitations started with continuing with the interim closures established in September 2022, while both the fishing industry and the conservation sector studied the Panel's Report.

"As announced upon the release of the Panel's Report, any consensus on fishing limitations will be implemented as they are agreed. This agreement for St. Croix and Bird Islands is such an agreement," concludes Minister Creecy.

[Protecting the African Penguin. Island Fishing Closures Confirmed](#)

[Greater Risk to Algoa Bay. Offshore Bunkering Moratorium](#)
