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Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment clamps down on abalone poaching



3 180 units of whole abandoned abalone were found by the Swartland K-9 Unit.

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Cape Town - As abalone and crayfish poaching continued unabated in the Overstrand, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) has deployed additional resources to fight the scourge.

On June 2, authorities found 4 108 abalone, with an estimated street value of R2 million, abandoned in a vehicle in 7th Street in Voëlklip, Hermanus.

This came after 3 180 units of whole abandoned abalone were found by the Swartland K-9 Unit in May.

Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment Minister Barbara Creecy, in a written response to questions posed in the National Council of Provinces, said the department was ramping up prevention efforts.

“The department is currently in the process of deploying operations within the Overberg region in terms of Initiative 5: The Enhanced Co-ordinated Enforcement Programme of the Marine Protection Services and Governance LAB of Operation Phakisa.

“The department, as the lead agency of this initiative, implements this programme to achieve an integrated and coordinated approach to ensure improved compliance within the South African Maritime Legislative and Regulatory frameworks within the coastal regions, which includes the Overberg region.”

Creecy said permit holders also had to notify the Local Fishery Control Officers when abalone and west coast rock lobster landings were taking place.

“The department has embarked on the development of abalone and west coast rock lobster poaching reduction strategies. These are processes that include stakeholder engagement with all role players involved in the abalone and west coast rock lobster fisheries,” she said.

DA Western Cape spokesperson on agriculture, environmental affairs and development planning, Andricus van der Westhuizen, previously said: “The poaching of our abalone has led to the near extinction of this species in the sea, with the very real possibility that the next generation will never even see one in its natural habitat. We must make a stand now and ensure that transgressors feel the consequences of their actions.”

Meanwhile, two suspects were arrested in Century City last week with abalone worth R1.2 million.

Police spokesperson Joseph Swartbooï said: “Vigilant police members operationalised the information at their disposal and tactically approached a house in Plover Close and gained entrance to the premises.

The members found two unsuspected men inside the house who were astonished by the presence of the members who caught them red-handed. The members proceeded to search the premises and confiscated a consignment of abalone with an estimated street value of more than R1.2 million. The two men aged 46 and 33 were arrested and detained on a charge of possession of abalone.”

Cape Times