

South Africa: Minister Commends Eastern Cape Abalone Poaching Bust

The Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Dr Dion George, has commanded a joint law enforcement operation, which led to the arrest of three suspects involved in illegal abalone possession in the Eastern Cape.

Three male suspects, aged 27, 28, and 32, were arrested in the early hours of Wednesday, following a joint operation by the Gonubie SAPS, East London Dog Unit, and Green Scorpions.

The operation was initiated after authorities received an intelligence about illegal diving activities at German Bay Beach.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, police spokesperson, Captain Hazel Mqala said the members of the force conducted surveillance from 10pm on Tuesday, and at approximately 3:30am, spotted four males emerging from the sea carrying bags.

"When the suspects noticed the law enforcement presence, they dropped the bags and attempted to flee back into the water. Three of the suspects were successfully apprehended, while the fourth escaped.

"Upon inspection, the recovered bags were found to contain 693 abalone with an estimated street value of R200 000," Mqala said.

George commended the law enforcement for their diligent efforts in apprehending the suspects, highlighting the importance of collaborative efforts in tackling environmental crime.

The Minister warned that abalone poaching threatens marine ecosystems and the livelihoods of dependent communities.

"This successful operation demonstrates the effectiveness of collaborative law enforcement efforts in combating the illegal harvesting and trade of our marine resources. Abalone poaching poses a severe threat to the sustainability of our marine ecosystems and undermines the livelihoods of communities that depend on these resources," George said.

George underscored government's firm stance against environmental crimes.

"The arrest of these suspects sends a clear message that such illegal activities will not be tolerated, and those responsible will face the full might of the law."

The Minister further acknowledged ongoing surveillance of enforcement teams.

"I am encouraged by the swift action taken by SAPS and their partners, as well as their commitment to ongoing surveillance and enforcement."

He reaffirmed the department's dedication to protect South Africa's natural heritage.

"As the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, I remain committed to supporting initiatives that protect our natural heritage and ensure the sustainable use of our marine resources.

"I urge communities to continue working with law enforcement by providing information that can help curb these illegal activities. Together, we can safeguard our environment for future generations," George said.

