

BLOOD IS THICKER THAN WATER

The Evolution of Coastal Management in South Africa

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Introduction

Like people in many nations, South Africans value their coastal resources and are striving to manage them more effectively (Cicin-Sain & Knecht 1998; CMPP 1998, 2000; Glavovic 2000 a, b, c; Glavovic et al. 2001). *The White Paper for Sustainable Coastal Development in South Africa* aims to promote sustainable coastal development through integrated coastal management. This new policy represents a marked shift from earlier views of the coast and how it should be managed. What was, until relatively recently, a predominantly biophysical and bureaucratic view has been transformed into a participatory approach driven by human development imperatives and the need to promote sustainable livelihoods. How did this transformation take place, and what lessons might this experience offer others grappling with vexing poverty and environmental issues?¹

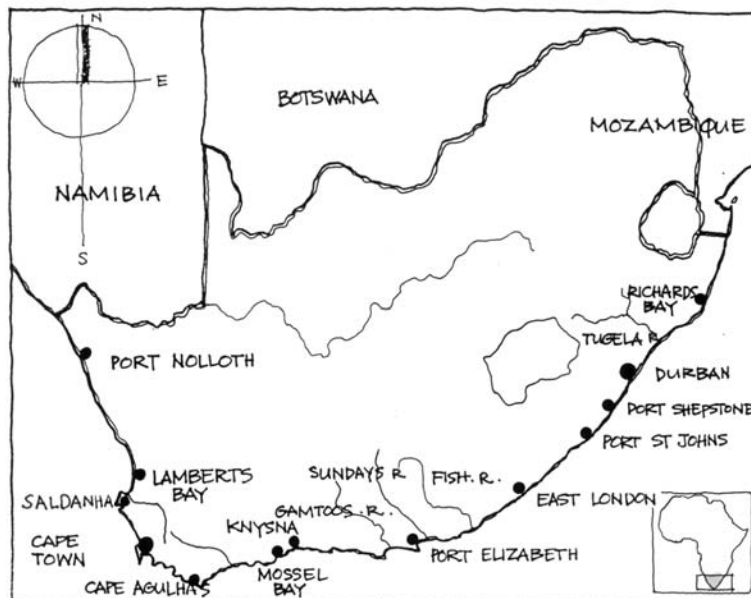
The Coastal Setting

The South African coast extends for 3,000 km from the desert coast of Namibia in the west to the tropical Mozambique coast in the east. It is

characterized by rich diversity in both the natural and human realms (see Figure 1).

For most of the 20th century, racial discrimination shaped public policy and development in South Africa, severely restricting access to and use of coastal resources. This process of dispossession and exploitation manifests itself in sharply divided social and geographical patterns of underdevelopment and development along the coast, where many, mainly black Africans, remain trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty and environmental degradation (May 1998; McCarthy et al. 1998). The need to unlock development opportunities to reduce poverty, meet basic needs and improve livelihood options is self-evident. The coast and its resources provide an important basis for bringing about this transformation. The new coastal policy focuses attention on how to realise this developmental potential, on a sustainable basis. This policy is a radical departure from earlier coastal management efforts. How then did this transformation take place?

Figure 1: The South African Coast (Source: Drawn by Henry Aikman in Glavovic 2000c:5)



Ad Hoc Sectoral Management: The 1970s

Concern about the coast and other environmental issues grew in the 1970s, with increasing media coverage of over-fishing, oil spills, ill-advised property and infrastructure developments and other 'ecological disasters' (Fuggle & Rabie 1992). Coastal management was carried out on a sector-by-sector basis by a range of agencies involved in, inter alia, nature conservation, fisheries management, land-use planning, and the construction and maintenance of coastal infrastructure. These activities were uncoordinated, with little attention given to the distinctive character of the coast and the interrelationships between these activities. By the end of the 1970s, there was a clear need to develop expertise in the emerging area of coastal zone management (CZM) and to coordinate coastal management activities more effectively.

CZM and Regulations; Ecology and Experts: The 1980s

In the early 1980s, the Department of Environment Affairs (DEA)² appointed coastal management staff and established two offices in the Cape. A wide range of activities was carried out, including commenting on the environmental impacts of Governmental activities (e.g., mining and development on state land), pollution control, protected area planning, funding and coordinating coastal research, and promoting awareness, education and training. But attention was focused mainly on the regulation of physical development in the coastal zone (Heydorn et al. 1985; Coetzee & Geldenhuys 1989; Heydorn et al. 1992; Sowman 1993).

Controlling Coastal Development

The focus on development control stemmed from the widely held view that township and resort development initiatives 'constitute the major development pressure in the coastal zone' (Sowman 1990:135). The coastal zone was viewed as a narrow interface between land and sea that was vulnerable to the ravages of human development. The main CZM challenge was to prevent ill-informed, malicious or high-risk physical development from negatively impacting the coastal zone and its distinctive ecosystems (Heydorn et al. 1985; Coetzee & Geldenhuys 1989; Sowman 1990, 1993). There was no formal requirement to carry out environmental impact assessments on coastal development

proposals and proposal evaluation was largely ad hoc (Sowman 1990).

Coastal Regulations were introduced in 1986, requiring permit approval for new developments within 1,000m of the high water mark (Rabie 1987; Sowman & Glazewski 1987). But the regulations were withdrawn shortly after they were introduced, ostensibly for legal and technical reasons (Rabie 1987). Inappropriate coastal development continued to occur, and concern about the resultant problems intensified. In the mid-1980s, the provincial administrations assumed increased responsibility for reviewing coastal development applications. But with the withdrawal of the regulations, there was no satisfactory measure to prevent inappropriate coastal development, until 1997 when mandatory environmental impact assessment procedures were introduced (Rabie 1987; Sowman & Glazewski 1987; Heydorn et al. 1992).

Ecological Research and Expert Advice

Considerable progress was made in coastal and marine research, and in building CZM capacity in the 1980s. This research was, however, focused on basic science and nature conservation issues, did not address human issues and was largely disconnected from the needs of coastal managers (Sowman & Wiseman 1991; Shackleton 1992). There was, however, growing recognition of the need to better understand the interactions between humans and their natural environment. It was also acknowledged that research should be conducted in a participatory manner, with improved communication between researchers (Sowman & Wiseman 1991).

The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) built up considerable CZM expertise during the 1980s. There was heavy reliance by all spheres of Government on the CSIR because of the specialist nature of this expertise. CZM expertise was also developed by a number of other organisations, notably the University of Port Elizabeth, the University of Cape Town, and the Oceanographic Research Institute. In general, however, little attention was focused on the political, social and economic dimensions of coastal management.

In the mid-1980s, the Coastal Management Office (CMO) of the DEA initiated a Coastal Management Advisory Programme to improve

public awareness about the coast, and to inform developers and Government agencies about the value and special attributes of the coastal zone, as well as its sensitivity to human impacts.

Drafting a CZM Policy

The Committee for Coastal and Marine Systems (CCMS) of the Council for the Environment (CE), established in 1982, significantly advanced CZM efforts in the 1980s. Drawn mainly from academia and Government, Committee members focused attention on the need for a coastal policy. In cooperation with the DEA, the CCMS defined principles and objectives for CZM, and guidelines for coastal land-use, based mainly on an ecological view of the coast. They stressed the need to avoid development in ecologically sensitive or high-risk areas of the coastal zone (CE 1989, 1991).

By the end of the 1980s, commentators felt that considerable progress had been made in CZM (Heydorn et al. 1985; Coetzee & Geldenhuys 1989; Retief et al. 1991; Heydorn et al. 1992; Sowman 1993).

Participatory Policy Formulation: The 1990s

The thrust of coastal management efforts changed markedly in the 1990s.

The Transition to a New Approach

The policy efforts of the CCMS were seen to be flawed because

... principles and objectives dealing with socio-economic and political issues, such as encouraging sustainable economic development, improved access to coastal resources, and public involvement in planning and decision-making, have not been addressed. Any comprehensive CZM policy would have to address these latter issues, especially in South Africa where socio-political changes demand that economic development be positively encouraged (Sowman 1993:167).

The transition to a new era of coastal management was signalled by DEA acknowledgement that a participatory policy formulation process was needed. At the start of 1992, the DEA appointed consultants to recommend how this might be done. A 'policy

dialogue' approach was recommended to ensure meaningful participation by all stakeholders (Kapp Prestedge Retief 1992). The DEA then embarked on a policy formulation process that was later called the Coastal Management Policy Programme (CMPP). But it took five years to set up the CMPP because of a series of administrative and logistical obstacles related to the political negotiations and transition to a new government³.

Setting Up the CMPP: 1992-1997

Two workshops and follow-up discussions were convened in 1993 and 1994 to gauge and secure political support for the policy initiative. Participants included all levels of government, liberation organisations, trade unions, the South African National Civics Organisation on behalf of black community-based organisations (CBOs), organised business, parastatal organisations and environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The agreements reached in these deliberations laid the foundation for the CMPP. It was recommended, inter alia, that an independent Policy Committee should oversee the process. Accountable to the Minister responsible for environmental matters, this Policy Committee was to be a government-civil society partnership, with five members representing government and five civil society members representing business, labour, CBOs, environmental NGOs and the sport and recreational sector. Members were to have equal status and decisions were to be made by consensus. These deliberations are noteworthy because they acknowledged the political character of coastal management, and the importance of securing broad support before initiating a public policy formulation process.

Between 1995 and 1996, the 'building blocks' of the CMPP were put in place, including £1,671,509 of donor funding from the British Government. The Policy Committee was established as an independent non-profit company, which was a novel approach in the public policy arena, reinforcing the concept of a government-civil society partnership. The following goals were defined for the CMPP:

- Promote meaningful participation
- Develop a policy that has scientific integrity
- Promote integrated coastal management
- Develop a practical policy

Detailed practical steps were then defined to carry out the CMPP in a transparent and accountable manner (Glavovic 2000b). At the end of April 1997, after five years of consultation and preparation, the CMPP could 'begin.'

*The Policy Formulation and Adoption Process:
May 1997-June 2000.*

The CMPP was an intensive process that involved coastal stakeholders along the entire coast. First, the program was launched with a media event and the distribution of 17,000 CMPP newsletters.

Second, many workshops, 'one-on-one' meetings and capacity building sessions were held to identify issues and define visions for each region. The results were translated into a national vision that was strongly endorsed by stakeholders. At the end of this stage, a cycle of local, provincial and national stakeholder participation had been integrated with specialist input, and the findings were endorsed by the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

Third, a further round of workshops and meetings was held to develop policy options. By the end of this stage, more than 5,000 people had been directly involved in the CMPP. Many more people were aware of the programme through the distribution of newsletters and programme documents, radio broadcasts and TV interviews, and coverage in local, provincial and national print media. During this stage, a new way of thinking about the coast and its management was developed. It involved a deliberate shift from a nature-centred approach to a people-centred approach that aimed to realise the developmental potential of the coast.

Fourth, the Coastal Policy Green Paper⁴ was drafted during this stage. Attention was also focused on planning the remaining stages of the CMPP and ensuring the successful transfer of 'ownership' from the Policy Committee to DEAT at the end of the process.

Fifth, the Green Paper was distributed to more than 15,000 people at the start of this stage. Another round of meetings and workshops was carried out to enable people to develop a good working knowledge of the document and to provide a forum for selecting the policy options most appropriate for their region. There was a positive response to the Green Paper. The CMPP was seen to have laid a credible

foundation, and there was a growing sense of urgency to move towards formal adoption and effective implementation of the emerging policy.

Sixth, the Draft White Paper was finalised and handed to the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism on the 11th of March 1999. The document was distributed and Regional managers held information sessions with stakeholders who had participated directly in the CMPP. The Policy Committee had fulfilled its obligations, and the DEAT could now seek formal Government and Cabinet approval.

Finally, with support for the proposed policy by all sectors and spheres of Government, and a wide diversity of stakeholders in all regions, Cabinet approved the proposed policy on the 1st of December 1999, and the official White Paper was released on the 6th of June 2000.

How then does the coastal management approach outlined in the White Paper differ from previous coastal management efforts?

The Distinguishing Features of the Coastal Policy

Firstly, the policy highlights the value of coastal ecosystems as a cornerstone for human development. It also highlights the development potential offered by coastal regions that were marginalized under apartheid.

Secondly, it stresses the important contribution that sustainable coastal development can make to reconstruction and development. In contrast to past efforts that were focussed on controlling human use of the coast's natural resources, this policy is people-centred. But it recognises that maintaining diverse, healthy and productive coastal ecosystems is imperative to promote sustainability.

Thirdly, whereas past efforts were fragmented, uncoordinated and sectoral, this policy views the coast as a system and advocates an holistic way of thinking by promoting ICM.

Finally, in contrast to the 'top-down' control and regulatory approach of the past, this policy introduces a new facilitatory style of management that involves cooperation and shared responsibility with a range of stakeholders, is responsive to the diversity of the coast and learns from experience (CMPP 2000).

The policy points out that realizing the coast's potential will require unprecedented investment in ICM, including political commitment, finances, public awareness, education and training, and new partnerships between key role players. The apparent success of the CMPP was, however, overshadowed by a nagging doubt: Would the sound rhetoric and good intentions of the policy be converted into 'action on the ground'?

Poverty Alleviation through Partnerships and Projects: The New Millennium⁵

Policy implementation is being coordinated by the CMO under the 'umbrella' of CoastCare, a partnership programme involving the private and public sectors. Significant progress has been made, including:

- Institutional and legal development: The CMO has drafted a National Coastal Management Bill that it plans to submit to Cabinet in early 2003.
- Awareness, education and training: Various initiatives are being carried out, including activities focused on poverty alleviation (see below).
- Information: Progress includes an internet-based CoastCare Information Centre; a CoastKeepers' Community Coastal Monitoring project; a computer based decision support system to assist local authorities in making informed decisions when issuing permits for potentially harmful activities in sensitive coastal areas; and research on the human dimension of ICM.
- Projects: Of particular note is the attention focussed on coastal poverty through two CoastCare programmes, the 'Working for the Coast programme' (WFTCP) and the 'Sustainable Coastal Livelihoods Programme' (SCLP). The WFTCP aims to provide jobs and training for poor coastal communities by maintaining a clean and safe coast. Within a year of the launch of the programme, it covered almost 60% of the coast, with activities at 55 project sites. More than 1,270 people were employed, contributing more than 150,000 days of work, collecting and disposing of more than 80,000 bags of waste, and receiving over 14,500 hours of training. Significant expansion of the programme is anticipated in the next financial year. The SCLP focuses attention on priority provincial and local-scale projects to promote sustainable coastal livelihoods. Efforts are currently underway to initiate projects focusing on the

following sectors and priority issues: Ports and small craft harbours; coast-dependent agriculture; tourism, leisure and recreation; mariculture; informal coastal resource use; safety and security services; rehabilitating degraded coastal areas and ecosystems; and coastal protected areas. Plans are underway to initiate 27 projects with significant funding in 2003.

Perhaps the most significant development to have occurred since the release of the White Paper is an even sharper focus on the role of the coast as an engine for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

The transformational impact of the CMPP is reflected in, firstly, the dramatic, nearly four-fold increase in the CMO budget in the year after Cabinet approval of the White Paper (Dr. Malan pers. comm.); and, secondly, the upgrade of the CMO from a Sub-directorate to a Directorate, raising the profile and capacity of the office responsible for coordinating policy implementation. The Government has therefore signalled its commitment to take coastal management more seriously than it has in the past.

The Relevance of this Experience

In my opinion, the new approach to coastal management introduced by the CMPP and the White Paper has led to unprecedented investment in coastal management. There is political and public 'buy-in' because (a) the CMPP was inclusive of all interests and was founded on a collaborative approach, and (b) the relevance of ICM was demonstrated by articulating the value of the country's coastal resources: rather than spending money on sorting out an environmental problem, it was argued, the government, civil society and the private sector need to invest in ICM to realise the coast's developmental potential. ICM is best seen as a means to achieving sustainable coastal development. Coastal management is now aligned with the main political drivers in South Africa: democratisation and the eradication of poverty.

This experience may only seem relevant to developing countries, where the division between rich and poor is starkest. I submit that this relevance also extends to developed nations. In New Zealand, for example, more serious attention might be given to the coastal

policy, and other environmental issues, if, firstly, all role-players were meaningfully involved in a collaborative process of policy formulation and implementation; and, secondly, if the contribution that natural resources make to human development were more clearly articulated as the *raison d'être* for environmental efforts rather than merely being a by-product. Surprisingly, ecological imperatives can be more effectively advanced by focussing on political, social and economic imperatives. Why? Because blood is thicker than water!

Notes

¹ This paper draws upon and extends work in my doctoral dissertation (Glavovic 2000d) and a report prepared on behalf of and distributed by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (Glavovic 2000b). It is important to note that I was the Project Manager of the team responsible for designing and managing the CMPP. I do not claim 'neutrality' in presenting these observations. I have, however, sought to provide a balanced perspective, drawing on published and unpublished documents, including the minutes of quarterly Policy Committee meetings. I have also surveyed the opinions of members of the CMPP team as well as other stakeholders and coastal management experts. This paper also builds on earlier work that was independently assessed and reviewed.

² The Department of Environmental Affairs was restructured after the 1994 elections to become the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT).

³ This account of the CMPP draws mainly upon the unpublished minutes of quarterly Policy Committee meetings to facilitate independent verification.

⁴ A Green Paper is a precursor to a White Paper, which outlines formal government policy once approved by Cabinet.

⁵ This account of policy implementation efforts is informed by the DEAT:CMO website and research by Common Ground Consulting on various aspects of the policy implementation process (see the webpage for the CoastCare programme, which outlines the aims of the programme as well as projects currently underway:

<http://www.environment.gov.za/ProjProg/CoastCare/index.htm>).

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