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BITOU MUNICIPALITY

OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF CENTRAL BEACH PUBLIC LAUNCH SITE

In terms of Section 2(2) of the management of Public launch Sites in the Coastal Zone
(Regulations GN. NO. R.497, 26 June 2014).



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. **History and Background**

The Central Beach Public Launch Site (PLS) in the Bitou Municipal area has historically been used to safely access the ocean for more than 100 years. It is situated within a sheltered bay enclosed by two rocky outcrops namely the Beacon Island, and the Wedge (also known as the Lookout Rocks).

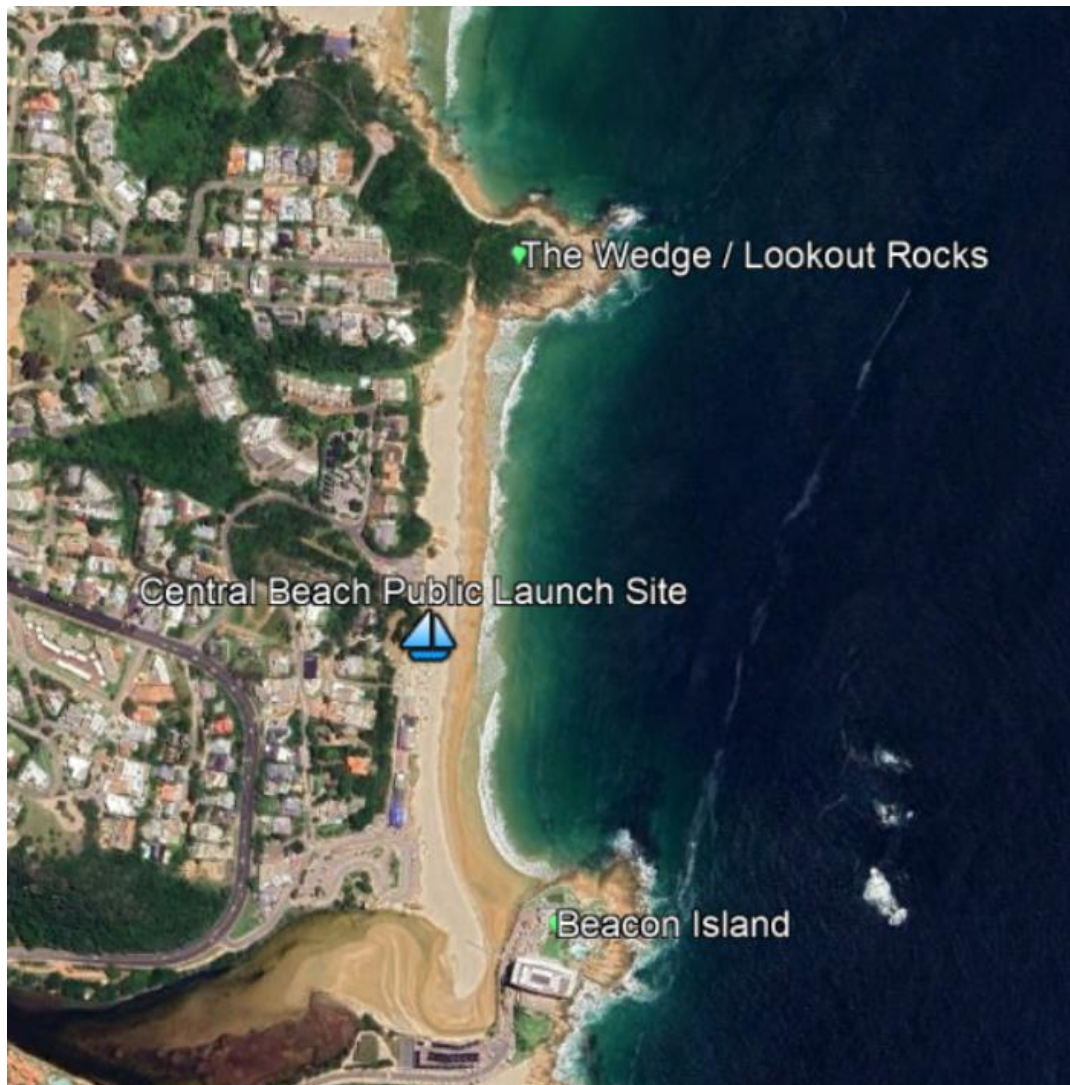


Figure 1 - Central Beach Public Launch Site, Plettenberg Bay

The area was historically used by timber merchants, fishermen and whalers. A whaling station was operated from Beacon Island and ceased operation in 1916. In the more recent past the area has been used by recreational and commercial fishermen as well as hosting ecotourism and adventure operators. Users have also included Jet Ski enthusiasts, sailors as well as inflatable and semi-rigid skippers.

The launch site was registered as an official boat launching site in 2005 after a Scoping Environmental Process was concluded. An Environmental Authorisation (EA) was granted by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (DEA&DP). An

Operational Management Plan (OMP) was approved as part of the process and has been used to manage the launching site.

In 2014, regulations came into effect that govern the listing and management of Public Launch Sites in the Coastal Zone (Regulations GN. NO. R.497, 26 June 2014). This Operational Plan is drafted to give effect to Section 2(2) of these regulations.

1.2. Site Location

Table 1 - Site Location of Central Beach Public Launch Site

Geographical Information			
Location Description			
Province	Western Cape	District Municipality	Garden Route
Local Municipality	Bitou Municipality	Town	Plettenberg Bay
GPS Co-ordinates			
Latitude	34° 3'29.23"S	Longitude	23°22'41.19"E

1.3. Legislative Framework

The National Environmental Management: Integrated Coastal Management Act, 2008 (Act No. 24 of 2008) and the associated Management of Public Launch Sites in the Coastal Zone Regulations GN. R497, 27 June 2014 are applicable to the listing and management of Public Launch Sites within South Africa.

The Central Beach Public Launch Site (referred to as the Plettenberg Bay Ski Boat Club) was listed by MEC: Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, Anton Bredell, as an official Public Launch Site and Bitou Municipality identified as the responsible Management Body, in the Provincial Gazette 7410, Provincial Notice 193/2015, on 26 June 2015.

The Public Launch Site Regulations 2(2) specifies that a Public Launch Site is to be managed in terms of an Operational Plan which must:

- (a) Determine the maximum daily, monthly or annual limit for the number of vehicles used to launch a vessel or vessels from each public launch site;
- (b) Determine the type or class of vessel which may be launched from a particular public launch site;
- (c) Impose any prohibitions or conditions relating to the use or management of a public launch site in general or, for any specific launch site; or
- (d) Regulate any other activity relating to the management of a public launch site.

This document will serve as the Operational Plan required in terms of Section 2(2) of the Public Launch Site Regulations (2014).

2. VISION

The vision remains to utilize the Public Launching Site on Central Beach in a manner that is holistic, efficient, and well maintained by reducing the ecological impacts, taking the social and economic needs of all users into account and providing an environmental management point for activities within the bay. It is imperative that future development incorporate empowerment of marginalised sectors of the local community as a core principle.

3. OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES AND CONDITIONS OF USE

3.1. Operating hours

The PLS will be operational between sunrise and sunset. The following specify these times in terms of seasonal changes:

September to April: 04:30 – 20:00

May to August: 06:30 – 18:00

Variation to these hours are at the discretion of the management authority. Special circumstances as described in Section 3.8 of this document may be applicable.

3.2. Access Control and Management Fees

- 3.2.1. Access control is exercised through the payment of a municipal service fee. All vehicles entering the launching area, to launch a boat, needs to pay the approved municipal service fees.
- 3.2.2. Municipal service fees may be issued on a daily, weekly or an annual rate and will be charged according to and in line with the approved Municipal Rates and Tariffs which are reviewed annually.
- 3.2.3. No alcohol or any other intoxicating substance shall be allowed on the premises.
- 3.2.4. Vehicle access to the slipway is restricted to tow vehicles directly associated with boat/vessel launching.

3.3. Parking and Traffic Control

- 3.3.1. Vehicle access to the launch area will only be allowed via the designated access point.
- 3.3.2. The extent of the Central Beach parking areas is indicated in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2 - Extent of parking areas (indicated in yellow) at Central Beach, Public Launch Site.

- 3.3.3. Parked vehicles/trailers should not obstruct access to the launch site by any user or visitor, nor interfere with reasonable use of the area by any user. Non-compliance is to be addressed in terms of section 6 of this report.
- 3.3.4. Boats should not be left unattended on the launch area and no parking of vehicles on or adjacent to the launch area is permitted.
- 3.3.5. Towing vehicles are parked on the beach during daylight hours only.
- 3.3.6. The NSRI parking area is to be kept clear at all times for stationed NSRI members and in case of an emergency.
- 3.3.7. Parking must not be permitted on dune vegetation or have an adverse impact on the environment.

3.4. **Launching and Beach Control**

- 3.4.1. All launching and beaching of vessels is controlled and co-ordinated through the Beach Control Office.
- 3.4.2. Communication occurs via the VHF/UHF base station radios in the Beach Control Office. All motorised vessels (excluding Tenders and PWCs) are required to have an operational VHF/UHF/29 MHz radio aboard and operating at all times.
- 3.4.3. All radio checks must be done prior to the launching of all vessels. Should the radio of a vessel be faulty, the vessel may not launch until the radio is fully functional.
- 3.4.4. Upon return all vessels must communicate via radio beaching (excluding Tenders and PWCs).
- 3.4.5. All vessels and skippers must have the necessary SAMSA approved certification and safety equipment before obtaining an Access Permit and being allowed to operate from the PLS.
- 3.4.6. No motorised or sailing vessels are to be navigated through the area of water between the Blinder Rocks and the Beacon Isle Hotel at any time.

3.5. **Limit on number of boats that may be launched**

The launching of boats is limited to the availability of parking within the demarcated parking area.

3.6. **Maximum overall length that shall apply to boats/vessels**

Launching at the site is restricted to:

Type	Restriction
All boats / vessels	10.3m

3.7. **Vessel and Public Safety**

The municipality, its contractors or any appointed management agent are not responsible for any accidents that may occur at the launch site or in the adjacent swimming areas. Use of these facilities shall be entirely at the risk of the user.

The following is applicable:

- 3.7.1. All vessels are to establish radio contact and permission to launch from the Beach Control Office while in a stationary position on the beach and prior to launching.
- 3.7.2. All vessels are to establish radio contact and permission to beach from Beach Control prior to beaching.
- 3.7.3. All vessels are to be marked according to SAMSA Regulations. This must include Seaworthy Certificates.
- 3.7.4. All vessels must have a VHF/UHF/29 MHz radio on board to communicate with Beach Control.
- 3.7.5. No person may picnic or sunbathe within the boundaries of the Boat Launching Site, or swim in the water along the Launch Area shoreline.
- 3.7.6. Any emergency on the beach must be reported to the Beach Control Office and NSRI who will then implement the required emergency procedure. A trauma pack is available at Beach Control

3.8. Seasonality / Special Circumstances

High season, emergencies and registered small-scale fisheries warrant special circumstances. Management of these instances are at the discretion of the management authority but are to be broadly guided by the following:

3.8.1. High Season

During high tourist season Plettenberg Bay, and Central Beach in particular, experience an exponential increase in users of the area and the facility. Additional trailer and vehicle parking areas are required and is to be guided and monitored by Municipal Beach Control. In order to accommodate the additional recreational users during this time period the grassed platform above the beach is utilised for the supplementary parking of approximately 30 trailers. Additional overflow parking is also available on the corner of Hopwood and Meeding Street. All trailers parked in this area have to clearly display their cell phone number. Beach Control is to assist in guiding the parking of trailers and vehicles in order to maintain access and control of the facility. Contact numbers of users are to be noted to be able to communicate with them should vehicles or trailers need to be moved.



Figure 3 - Additional overflow parking areas (shown in blue) during High Season conditions

3.8.2. Emergencies

In the case of emergency conditions vessels may need to be launched or beached in the dark. This poses safety risks to the vessel operators in terms of poor visibility of obstacles and potentially to persons on the beach at the time. All precautions are to be taken where possible to ensure that no persons are within the area of launching or beaching prior to it being undertaken. The municipality will not be held liable for any injury that occurs during these circumstances. All emergency incidents are to be reported to Beach Control.

3.8.3. Small-scale Fisheries

Small-Scale Fishers are defined as being fully reliant on the marine environment for their basic food and livelihood needs. Section 1 of the Marine Living Resources Act (MLRA, Act 18 of 1998, as amended) contain the following definition:

‘Small-scale fisher’ means a member of a small-scale fishing community engaged in fishing to meet food and basic livelihood needs, or directly involved in processing or marketing of fish, who –

- (a) traditionally operate in near-shore fishing grounds;
- (b) predominantly employ traditional low technology or passive fishing gear;
- (c) undertake single day fishing trips; and
- (d) is engaged in consumption, barter or sale of fish or otherwise involved in commercial activity, all within the small-scale fisheries sector

Regulations relating to Small-Scale Fishing (2016) have been promulgated in terms of the MLRA and further aim to manage this sector. These regulations and definition as quoted above are applicable. The municipal service fee applicable to small-scale fishers for the use of the launching facilities are at the discretion of Council and may be revised as they see fit.

Special arrangements may be made between Beach Control and registered small-scale fishers regarding use of the facility. It should be noted that launching or beaching in the dark poses safety risks to the vessel operator in terms of poor visibility of obstacles and potentially to persons on the beach at the time. The municipality will not be held liable for any injury that occurs during these circumstances.

4. CODE OF CONDUCT

A copy of the Code of Conduct is to be signed by every user of the boat launching facility as acknowledgement of the rules and regulations. Signed documentation is to be kept at the beach control offices as record.

4.1. Slipway Etiquette and Guidelines

- 4.1.1. Only **registered and seaworthy** vessels are allowed to make use of the Central Beach launching facilities.
- 4.1.2. Boat operators must be in possession of a **valid skipper license**.
- 4.1.3. Vessels are **not allowed to create an obstruction** to the launch area which hinders the entry and exit route to the launch area.
- 4.1.4. In the interest of safety and minimising frustration to boaters and others, everyone is required to **adhere strictly to these guidelines** and to report any ongoing disregard thereof to the offenders or to the compliance officers in serious cases.\
- 4.1.5. All skippers shall strive to **minimise the time that their boats and trailers occupy the slipway** in the interest of other boaters and bathers alike. In this regard, skippers are encouraged to prepare a pre-launch checklist, including pre-season equipment checks, and to ensure that all crew and driver are all available to avoid delay, prior to entering the queue to launch. No-one may enter the queue if boats are waiting to return from sea.
- 4.1.6. There shall be only **one vehicle and trailer permitted on the slipway** at any given time.

- 4.1.7. All trailers and boats shall be fitted with **safety chains/ropes** and these shall be used at all times that the boat is on the trailer.
- 4.1.8. The skipper, prior to commencing his passage to sea shall **nominate a crew member also to look out for bathers in the water**, before proceeding at a safe speed.
- 4.1.9. The **SAMSA regulations** regarding required trailer markings, applicable safety equipment, limitations on vessels and skippers compliance certificates shall **strictly be adhered to**. Marine radio and cell phone reception is poor in some areas so skippers shall ensure that their intended destinations (and when altered) are known to their emergency contact person.
- 4.1.10. **Boats returning from sea shall have priority** access to the slipway over boats wanting to launch (except for those boats already queued up to launch) and the latter shall not obstruct access to the slipway nor hinder retrieval.
- 4.1.11. The skipper, prior to commencing his **return to the slipway**, shall advise his intention to do so and shall also nominate a crew member to look out for bathers in the water, before proceeding at a safe speed. The onus shall then be with bathers to get out of the way.
- 4.1.12. No boats may be left unattended on the slipway at any time.
- 4.1.13. Boats, **once retrieved shall drive sufficiently up the road** to provide others attempting to launch sufficient space to do so and for other vehicles to pass. They shall then move on timeously to enable the next vehicle and trailer sufficient space to stop. Removal of bungs, etc. may not result in water running down the slipway or into the sea.
- 4.1.14. **Compliance Officers** are requested not to perform their inspections in areas that obstruct or unreasonably delay the launching or retrieval of other boats nor, for safety reasons, shall they board a retrieved boat without prior advice to the skipper/driver.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The users of this site must comply with the provisions of the general duty of care principle and the remediation stipulated in terms of section 28 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998), the provisions of the National Environmental Management: Integrated Coastal Management Act, 2008 (Act No. 24 of 2008) as well as all other relevant legislation.

The vegetated areas surrounding the launching facility are demarcated as "no-go" areas and are to be protected, maintained and rehabilitated where necessary. Potential erosion areas are to be monitored and treated as soon as possible. Driving over sand dunes and vegetation of any sort is prohibited.

All fishing vessels must wash their decks at sea beyond the one kilometre radius off Central Beach Boat Launching Site. No washing of vessels, trailers or vehicles, scaling and cleaning of fish, disposal of bait or the selling of any fish may take place. No dumping of bait is allowed at the beach. Burning or burying of any waste is not permitted on this site. Everyone using the site and the beach areas shall collect their litter, including cigarette butts, and dispose of these in the refuse bins provided.

Fuels and oils are to be transported in recognised sealed fuel or oil containers and are only to be opened once on the deck of the vessel. No containers are to be left at the launching site overnight. Should an oil spill occur, sand is to be spread over the spill to absorb the fuel

or oil. The contaminated sand is to be removed and appropriately disposed of. No boat engines are to be serviced or given oil changes within the site.

6. COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

The Bitou Municipality or its authorised management agent have the responsibility to ensure compliance with the Operational Management Plan and have the authority to enforce the requirements specified in this document. Enforcement actions are to be undertaken taking the following guidelines into consideration:

- First time offenders are to be given verbal warning which is to be followed up in writing.
- First time offenders committing serious acts of non-compliance that jeopardise the safety of people may be immediately liable to a fine.
- Second time offenders may be subject to a fine as per the fining scheme as specified below.
- Second time offenders may be blacklisted at the discretion of the Management Agent.
- Third time offenders are liable for a fine at a compounded rate and may be banned from the Public Launch Site for a minimum period of 3 months.
- Enforcement action and fines issued should be recorded by the Management Agent and reported to the relevant senior officials within the municipality on a monthly basis.

6.1. Fining Scheme

The following fining scheme is proposed to address non-compliance with the Operational Management Plan. The Bitou Municipality reserve the right to amend the fining scheme on an annual review basis.

Table 2 - Fining Scheme applicable to non-compliance with the OMP for the Public Launch Site

Contravention	Second-time Offender	Third-time Offender
Non-compliance with Operational Management Plan for minor offences related to parking and similar instances	R500.00	R1 500.00
Non-compliance with Operational Management Plan for acts of pollution or similar instances	R750.00	R2 250.00
Non-compliance with Operational Management Plan for offences that compromises the safety of people or similar instances	R1 000.00	R3 000.00

7. MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

The Bitou Municipality is responsible for the management and access control to Central Beach Public Launching Site. The Bitou Municipality may appoint a management agent to manage this public launch site on its behalf in terms of a service level agreement (SLA).

7.1. **Central Beach Forum**

A Central Beach Forum is to be established which will meet on a quarterly basis to discuss matters relating to the operations and use of the Public Launch Site. Representation should be sought from the following sectors:

- 7.1.1. Bitou Municipality
- 7.1.2. NSRI
- 7.1.3. Commercial Operators
- 7.1.4. Recreational Fishermen
- 7.1.5. Small Scale Fishers
- 7.1.6. Research and Science
- 7.1.7. Sports and tourism operators
- 7.1.8. Lease holders of buildings at the launch site

A terms of reference is to be drafted which should detail the composition and governance of the forum which should include inter alia the election of a chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary as well as what constitutes a Quorum and any envisaged voting procedures. The objectives of the Central Beach Forum would be to provide a platform where all users of the facility are able to interact, provide relevant feedback and table requests regarding the operations of the launch site.