



THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE UTHUKELA MARINE PROTECTED AREA

September 2026



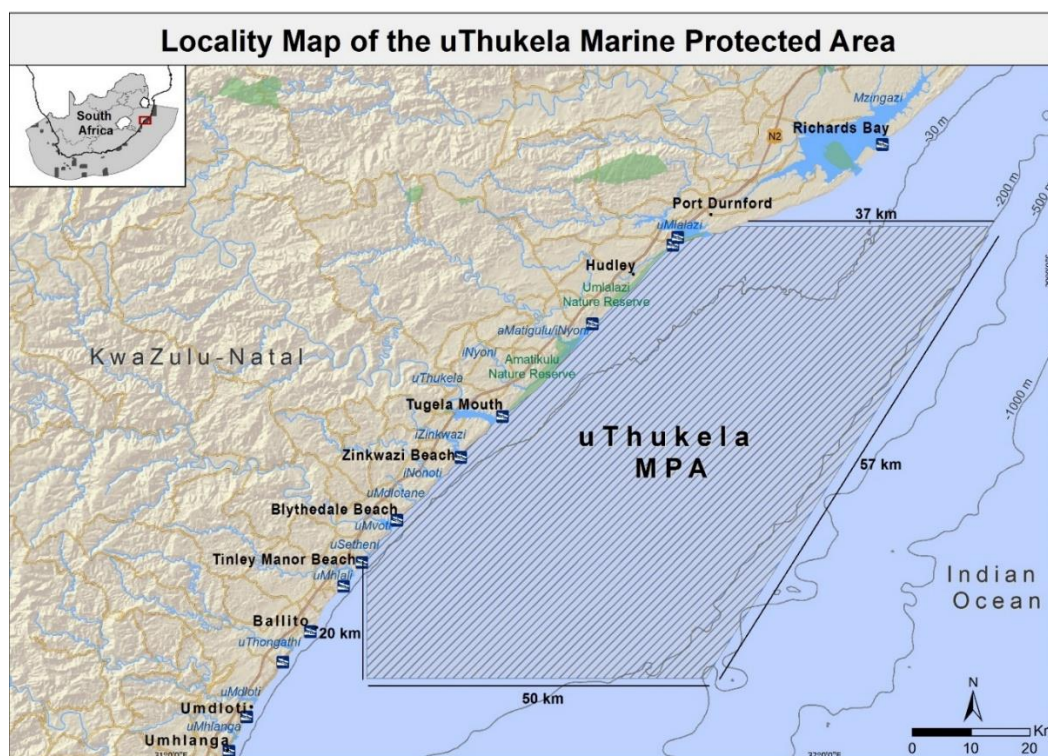
BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT (BID)

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS BID?

This BID aims to provide the stakeholders or Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) with background information regarding the development of a Management Plan for the uThukela Marine Protected Area (MPA), in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). The BID also describes the process of developing the management plan and provides guidance on how one can become involved in the process. Public participation, as a legislative requirement, plays an important role in the development and finalisation of an MPA management plan. The input and comments received from stakeholders are considered during this process and used to shape the document.

THE UTHUKELA MPA

The uThukela MPA is one of the five KZN MPAs. It was proclaimed in May 2019 together with 20 other South African MPAs. It is situated off the coast of KwaZulu-Natal, extending from approximately 4km north of the uMlalazi estuary to 400m south of the Seteni Estuary and including part of the uThukela estuary. It also includes a 75km of offshore waters parallel to the coast, stretching from the northern to the southern boundary of the MPA. This ranges from 37km offshore in the north to 50 km offshore in south. It provides protection to a wide range of vertebrate and invertebrate species and is the centre of an area of important land-sea connectivity as well as supporting critical ecosystem processes.



WHY WAS THE UTHUKELA MPA PROCLAIMED?

The uThukela MPA was proclaimed because of the unique and threatened benthic ecosystem types and associated ecological processes of the area contained within this area of the KZN Bight.

THE PURPOSE OF THE UTHUKELA MPA

- a) to contribute to a national, regional and global representative system of MPAs by conserving and protecting interconnected coastal and offshore benthic and pelagic ecosystems of the KZN Bight. These include estuaries, sandy beaches, rocky shores, fluvial fans, soft sediment, gravel and reefs on the shelf, submarine canyons, the shelf edge and slope ecosystems.
- b) to conserve and protect the ecologically sensitive biodiversity and the ecological processes associated with these ecosystems, including fragile coral and sponge habitats; threatened species and ecosystem types; the connectivity, spawning area and nursery function; and the critical role of fresh water riverine input as a supply of nutrients and suspended sediment.
- c) to protect protected, threatened and overexploited species such as:
 - marine mammals;
 - turtles;
 - seventy-four;
 - geelbek;
 - square tail kob;
 - dusky kob;
 - white edge rockcod;
 - garrick;
 - black musselcracker; and
 - hammerhead sharks.
- d) to conserve and protect an area of life history importance for crustacean and migratory species including marine mammals, turtles, sharks, seabreams, triplefins and other fish.
- e) to support the recovery of linefish, rays and sharks by protecting spawning, nursery, foraging, aggregation and

refuge areas for threatened and overexploited species.

- f) to facilitate species management and sustainable use of linefish by supporting fisheries recovery and enhanced species abundance in fished areas.
- g) to protect and regulate a scenic area to support sustainable nature-based tourism, spiritual and coastal assets and a functionally connected coastal-marine system to retain a land-ocean 'sense of place.'
- h) to provide reference sites for research and monitoring and to promote and contribute to environmental education.

DRAFT VISION FOR THE UTHUKELA MPA

To effectively manage the uThukela MPA, its biodiversity and associated ecological processes; to provide protection of ecosystems, nursery areas and recovery of linefish species, demersal and pelagic communities and resources in way that maintains the ecological integrity of the area and its associated benefits to people.

EIGHT THEMES AND GOALS OF THE UTHUKELA MPA MANAGEMENT

- i) Theme 1: Governance - To ensure effective governance and management of the MPA, in adherence with management principles.
- j) Theme 2: Biodiversity and Conservation - to conserve and protect the ecosystems, ecological processes and biodiversity of the uThukela MPA.
- k) Theme 3: Socio-economic benefits - Natural Resource use, Recreation, Tourism, Heritage and Culture - To ensure sustainable social and economic benefits from the uThukela MPA.
- l) Theme 4: Compliance and Enforcement - To ensure adherence to the regulations of the uThukela MPA
- m) Theme 5: Disaster Management - To provide for the safety of the biodiversity

and human elements, and the continued functioning of the ecological processes of the MPA in the face of any environmental crisis.

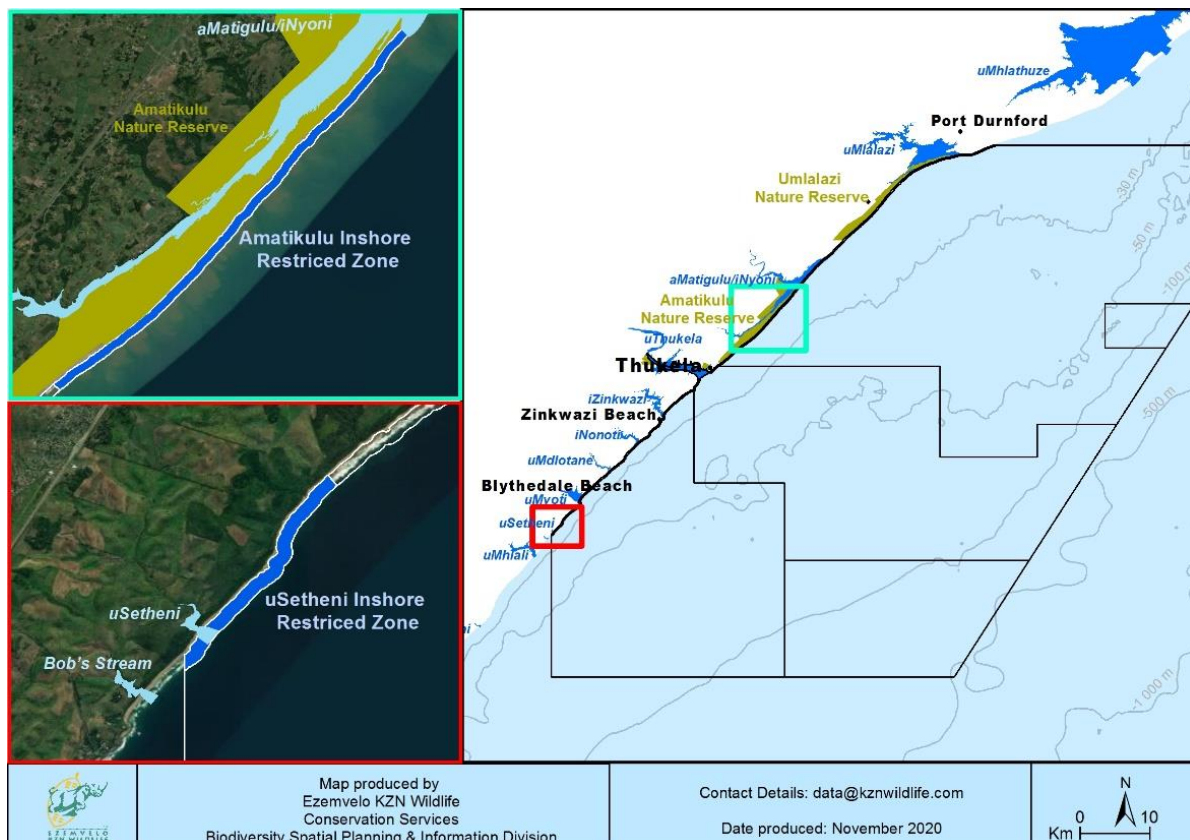
- n) Theme 6: Planning - To integrate the management of the MPA with external developments, processes and impacts to ensure that the MPA objectives are not compromised by these issues.
- o) Theme 7: Engagement, Education and Public awareness - To engage resource users, stakeholders and the general public on the attributes, function and benefits of the MPA including its contribution(s) to marine conservation and sustainable use.
- p) Theme 8: Research, Monitoring and Information management - To realise the potential of the uThukela MPA for enhancing scientific knowledge and increasing the evidence base to inform ecosystem-based management.

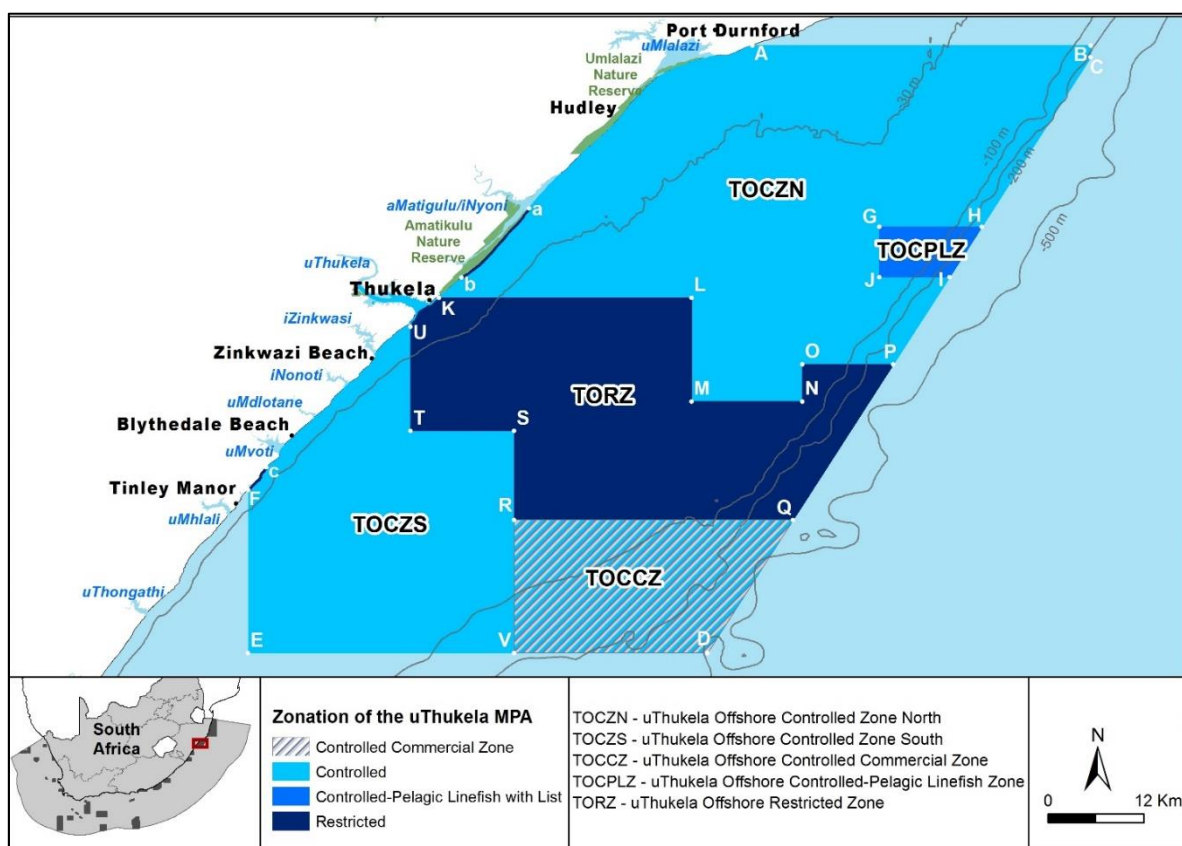
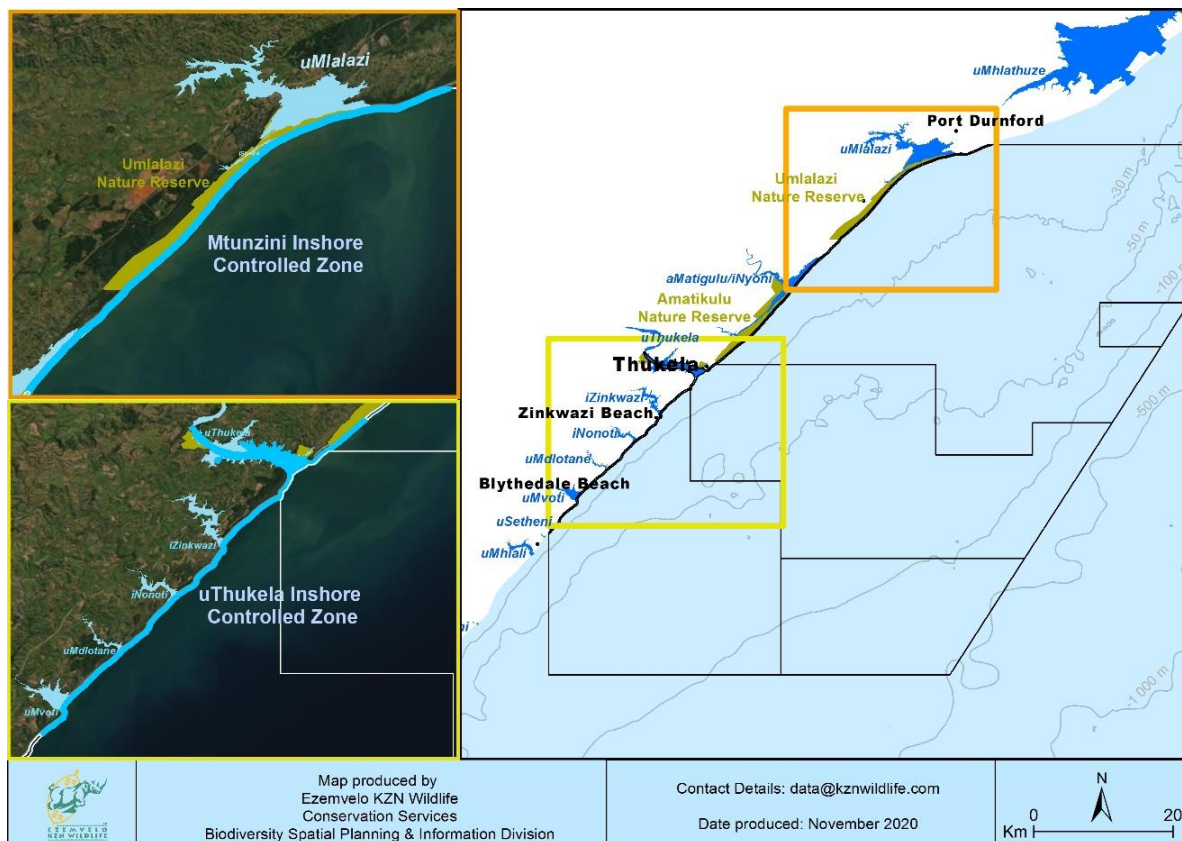
ZONATION OF THE UTHUKELA MPA

The Marine Protected Area consists of an inshore and offshore area. The inshore area consists of two Inshore Restricted Zones and

two Inshore Controlled Zones. The offshore area consists of four Offshore Controlled Zones, one Offshore Controlled-Pelagic Linefish Zone and one Offshore Restricted Zone:

- a) two inshore Restricted Zones, indicated as the Amatikulu Inshore Restricted Zone and the uSetheni Inshore Restricted Zone;
- b) two inshore Controlled Zones indicated as the uThukela Inshore Controlled Zone and the Mtunzini Inshore Controlled Zone;
- c) three offshore Controlled Zones, indicated as the Thukela Offshore Controlled Zone North, the uThukela Offshore Controlled Zone South and the uThukela Offshore Controlled Commercial Zone;
- d) one offshore Controlled-Pelagic Linefish Zone, indicated as the uThukela Offshore Controlled-Pelagic Linefish Zone; and
- e) one offshore Restricted Zone, indicated as uThukela Offshore Restricted Zone





STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION PROCESS

Consultation and transparency are principles that Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (Ezemvelo) and the Department of Forestry,

Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) subscribe to in preparing MPA management plans. As part of the development phase, all I&APs will be

actively involved through a stakeholder consultation process. The draft management plan will be made available for input and comment by all I&APs prior to its finalisation and submission for approval by the Minister. Your input into this process forms a key part of developing an effective plan and we would like to hear from you to obtain your views on the proposed Management Plan.

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

Phelamanga has been appointed by Ezemvelo and DFFE as the independent public participation consultant. If you consider yourself as an I&AP for this proposed project, we urge you to become involved.

1. By responding (by phone or e-mail) to our invitation for your involvement in the process and registering on the I&AP database;
2. By attending the workshops/meetings to be held during the course of the project. The meeting dates will be advertised in various platforms including email, community notice boards and local newspapers, and stakeholders on the database will be notified accordingly;
3. In writing by contacting the consultants if you have a query, comment or require further project information; and
4. By reviewing and commenting on the draft Management Plan.

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

The aim of the workshops proposed to be held is to:

1. Formally introduce Phelamanga, the appointed stakeholder consultant for this project.
2. Present the process which is followed in developing an MPA management plan;

3. Provide an opportunity for participants to provide input and comments on the process; and
4. Provide an opportunity for additional important issues in relation to the uThukela MPA to be raised.

If you (or your organisation) consider yourself as an I&AP for this proposed management plan and would like to participate in this process by attending the above workshop, or would like any further information, please contact:

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