



forestry, fisheries & the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ref: O2/1/5/2

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 1975 {NW2315E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 18 of 2022

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 20 May 2022

Mr D W Bryant (DA) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

- (1) Whether, in view of the success of the seal rehabilitation programme in the Dassen Island area along the West Coast that has led to an increase in the seal population which appears to have impacted fish stocks in the area, while recent high numbers of deaths of seals in the area have been attributed to low fish stocks leaving fisherfolk worried that their livelihoods may be at risk, any recent studies have been carried out by her department on the growth in the seal population in this area and its potential impact on fish stocks; if not, why not; if so, what were the results;
- (2) what impact has she found does natural predation have on the seal population in the area;
- (3) what is the current estimated population of seals in the Dassen Island area?

1975. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

- 1) The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) is not aware of any Cape fur seal rehabilitation programme around the Dassen Island area. The DFFE undertakes a seal population monitoring effort at all known seal breeding and haul-out colonies in South Africa. The South African population is estimated at more than 650 000 individuals (based on the 2020 survey). No recent studies have been conducted on seal and fish interactions. These are planned as part of the science plan investigating pressures on the African Penguin population, which includes competition with seals for food fish such as anchovy and sardine. A second version of the African Penguin Biodiversity Management Plan will be published for comment in 2022.

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- 2) Cape fur seals have no known significant predators on the west coast, particularly in the Dassen Island area.
- 3) An estimated 400 individuals hauled out at Dassen Island in 2021. No breeding has been observed at this site.

Regards



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MS B D CREECY, MP

MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE: ...1/06/2022.....