



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Minister Xasa congratulates Blue Flag Beaches

04 CWcVYf 2017

Minister of Tourism, Tokozile Xasa applauded the 44 beaches that have obtained full Blue Flag status along with 11 sustainable boats and seven marinas during a beach certification programme held at Dolphin Beach, Jeffreys Bay.

The Blue Flag programme has been in operation since 1987 and, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, is the most well-known eco-label of its kind. It is an international annual award which focuses on the environmental management of our coastline and coastal waters to help tourism growth and development. Although it is a voluntary eco-label, has become an international symbol of quality for beaches, boats and marinas that meet a standard of excellence in the areas of safety, amenities, cleanliness, environmental information and environmental management.

“We are re-awarding Blue Flag status to some of the beaches that lost their blue flag status in the 2016/17 season. I would like to attribute this achievement to the Department’s Blue Flag Beach Steward project which place young people on these beaches to maintain their Blue Flag standards,” said Minister Xasa.

The Department of Tourism in partnership with Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) launched the Blue Flag Beach Steward project in October 2016. It is a 28-month long initiative aimed at training 200 youth from low-income, coastal households in the National Certificate in Environmental Education Training and Development Practices NQF 5 specialising in Tourism.

The beach stewards provide local member municipalities with adequate infrastructural support to maintain the required high standards of safety, environmental management, water quality and environmental education at Blue Flag sites, as well as assist other beaches to attain this prestigious status.

The Blue Flag Beach Steward programme is part of the Coastal and Marine Tourism Implementation Plan which is a focus area of Operation Phakisa’s Oceans Economy. The plan envisions to grow a world class and sustainable coastal and marine tourism destination that leverages South Africa’s competitive advantage in nature, culture, and heritage.

“The coastal and marine tourism sector will contribute about R21.4 billion to the GDP and create about 116 000 direct jobs by 2026, thus reducing poverty, inequality and unemployment, while contributing to sustainable livelihoods and development. These estimates are conservative as they are growing from a low 2015 base of R 11.9 billion direct contribution to GDP and 64 400 direct jobs,” concluded the Minister.

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