

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURE

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SOUTH AFRICAN HERITAGE RESOURCES AGENCY

DECLARATION OF THE NOORDKAPPERPUNT STONE-WALLED FISH TRAPS AS
NATIONAL HERITAGE SITE

By virtue of the powers vested in the South African Heritage Resources Agency, in terms of section 27 (5) of the National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999) SAHRA hereby declares the Noordkapperpunt Stone-Walled Fish Traps, Hessequa Municipality, Western Cape as a National Heritage Site.

Statement of Significance

The Noordkapperpunt (NKP) Fish Traps at Still Bay, comprises of at least 25 stonewalled fish traps which form a site of invaluable and irreplaceable historic, aesthetic and scientific significance. These are the best preserved representation of a step in the technological and economic evolution of fishing practices in South Africa. They represent a method of exploiting marine resources that was once a common fishing method along the Southern Cape Coast in historical times and possibly earlier, and is still used today by coastal communities. While the fishing methods have continued to evolve, the indigenous knowledge of the maintenance of these traps lives on in local communities.

The traps are of undetermined age and origin. Research in South Africa indicates that this technology was certainly in use during colonial times, with archival evidence from 1892 onwards. However, it is entirely possible that this technology is far older. Evidence from archaeological excavations near Still Bay indicates that marine resources were being exploited by the ancestors of San hunter-gatherers as much as 60 000 years ago. At other places along the coast, fishing equipment such as sinkers and hooks show that the Later Stone Age people had become skilled fishermen¹. Relatively recent studies, however, suggest that the NKP fish traps were constructed after the 1920s by local farmers (Hine 2008, 2010) and it is possible that the European settlers who came over to South Africa brought the technology with them as there are many European examples of the construction and use of historical stone-walled fish traps (cf. Hine 2010, Chadwick and Catchpole 2013). Whatever their age and origin, these fish traps have been used and maintained by local fishermen and farmers since at least the early 20th century and are still usable today. Aerial photographs show that new traps were built between 1938 and 2006 (Kemp 2006). The local/indigenous knowledge of the use and maintenance of these traps resides in the local community but is gradually being lost.

Schedule

The traps are situated in an area bounded by the high water mark in the west and a line running between the following co-ordinates in the east: -34.393233 S; 21.415275 E and -34.399529 S; 21.413980 E

¹ Deacon, J. 1997 National Monuments Council File Reference 9/2/079/9