



Point Watersports Club

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Management Protocol:

Point Waterfront Beachfront Zone [Vetch's beach]

1. Purpose and Background:

The Point Watersports Club (PWC) is a non-profit organisation formed by 2 water sports clubs operating on Vetch's Beach zone consisting of the Durban Ski Boat Club and Durban Undersea Club. PWC will operate the beach zone under the guidelines and approval thereof the Port Captain. The "Local Authority" at Vetch's falls under Durban Metro, but Port Captain's Water from Cooper Light to Umgeni River mouth and from HWM to 1 nautical mile off shore, Port Captain has delegated responsibilities to the club.

It is hereby noted that two other water sport clubs, namely The Point Yacht Club and The Durban Paddle Ski Club also have a presence at Vetch's beach and its beach and water-side activities are also managed by this protocol.

The purpose of this document is to set out the beach operation, management, and access protocol of the PWC to safely control the operational launch zone on the beach adjacent to the Point Waterfront development and promenade. The document will provide clear roles and responsibilities.

Note: Further changes to this document will be signed off by the Signatories or their Successors.

The operational zone will embrace the Vetch's basin which is the beach and water area bordered by:

- the beach base of north harbour breakwater,
- the beach side of the promenade,
- the beach base of Vetch's reef
- and the body water of water bordered by the extent of Vetch's reef to the "block" at the end
- and a straight drawn southward from the "block" to the north harbour breakwater

Attached as **Annexure 1** is the plan depicting the zone on which this document will be applicable.

For over the past 50 years the Durban Ski Boat Club has managed the operational beach that forms the area from the base of Vetch's pier to the North pier which was never designated as a primary swimming beach and hence there were rarely incidents between bathers and watercraft.

The Point Yacht Club has managed all sailing and wind powered activities.

This area now includes a bathing area on the northern side of the Vetch's basin and along with the new promenade; there is a growth in swimming activity, increasing the possibilities of an incident between bathers and watercraft.

In order to cater for the growth in demand of the Vetch's basin, a flexible management approach is required.

2. Prime Importance:

The beach must always be available to the general public, and their safety and security are paramount. Additionally, the beach must be managed in such a way to ensure that it remains an asset for the Waterfront and that the profile of those attracted is in line with the vision of the area.

3. Important Operational Considerations:

- Safety and security are the prime drivers.
- Safety conditions change continually – tides, good weather, time of day or night, storm conditions, currents, volumes of people, and good fishing conditions – more boats, wind, tidal rips, heavy shore break, available beach area, beach softness, beach sink holes post pumping, special events such as the DSBC Festival, Surf Ski Championships, International and Local Yachting events influence how the beach must be managed.
- Due to the easy public access to the Vetch's basin, ensuring the physical security of all users of the area will be a critical factor.

4. Current Activities:

- With easier access, more non-residents and non-members are using the beach as day visitors. These are normally families that will sun and water bathe and have a picnic on the beach, setting up their beach umbrellas.
- Due to the easy access and safe launch conditions, there is a steady growth in the number of Ski Boats and Jet Skis in the area.
- Surf Anglers who enjoy fishing off the beach, especially at night now that other city piers are closed to them
- Yachting activity.
- More people walking their dogs.
- Kite and wind surfers.
- Large numbers of Surf Ski users.
- Fishing Paddle Skis.
- Dive Charter Boats.
- Learner Surfers.
- Seine Netters using the Vetch's basin and area immediately adjacent to it.
- Sardine Netting boats – limited occasionally to July month during the sardine-run.
- Learner as well as Marine Aquarist Snorkelers.
- Spear Fishermen.
- Small Business operators such as those hiring out paddle skis & jet skis.
- Sand Pumping (non-recreational activity).
- Competitive activities such as yachting, surf ski and ski boat competitions.

When combining all the above activities into a “mixing bowl” it may seem impossible for this to work, however it does due to the following factors:

5. The Natural Order of Activity:

- Ski Boats and Jet Skis generally launch between first light and 06h00 and return haphazardly depending on weather and sea conditions until around 15h00. The launching site is determined first thing in the morning and signage erected to demarcate the area. Beach users respect these signs at present but may become a problem as the beach becomes more popular.

A few night rated ski-boats launch and beach in the dark, special consideration is taken by the relevant DSBC members regarding the safety of other beach users when using the beach at night. Night anglers are required to have the necessary qualifications to launch after dark. The vessel needs to be night rated as well as the skipper.

Vetch's Beach is a designated sheltered launch site and one of the few sites on the KZN Coast where ski-boats are permitted to launch and beach in the dark.

- The Yachts start their sailing activities generally around 11h00 depending on wind conditions and return about 14h00 to 17h00.

- The day visitors normally arrive around 09h00 and, depending on the weather, normally leave around midday.
- The dog walkers normally start very early and return around 10h00, however they can be found at any time of the day.
- The Wind and Kite surfers are usually active in the mid afternoon when the wind is generally the strongest as they require a strong wind. They are normally the only users during these windy conditions.
- Dive boat charters usually depart around 8am and return at two-hour intervals, depending on weather and sea conditions.
- Paddle Ski Club anglers launch early and return mid-morning.
- The Surf Ski users can be found at any time as they enjoy all conditions. Busier times are Tuesday and Thursday afternoons (16h00), and Saturday mornings around 07h00 where they are usually out of the water by 09h00.
- The Seine Netters use early morning and are off the beach by 08h00. During the Sardine Run (July), netting can take place any time and without regard for other water sport users. If netting takes place within the Vetch's basin, these activities fall under this management protocol.

See Annexure 1 which shows the current **ACTIVITIES** and indicates an even spread throughout the day, with possible peaks between 05h00 and 08h00 and again between 13h00 and 17h00. **Annexure 1** also indicates peak periods between 13h00 and 15h00. It further indicates a busy period between 06h00 and 08h00 and again in the afternoons from 15h00 to 17h00. After 17h00 the activities would be mainly around beach walkers and within the clubs.

See Annexure 2, (estimates used), which indicates the **RISKS** at various times of the day, but also takes into consideration weather conditions.

6. Considerations:

- The scale of usage of the Vetch's basin will always be dependent on weather conditions
- The PWC is best positioned to manage the beach due to the established control mechanisms currently in place to manage the majority of water sport users and, to a certain degree, even the general public.
- PYC will manage all yachting and wind powered activities and will consult with PWC to ensure that all beach usage is co-ordinated.
- The PWC, through its social membership base, understands the beach going public and is active in providing information and assistance in terms of dealing with tides, blue bottle stings, minor abrasions caused by reefs, etc.

7. The Principle Management Protocols:

- **Launch Access**
- To prevent congestion at the launch ramp and launch control areas (**see annexure 3**), access control to the launch site and club parking is situated in Signal Road. The PWC access control staffs are to ensure that the launch ramp area under the promenade is not congested and that a free flow of launching and returning vehicles is always possible.
- There are two launch assist options available to a person wanting to launch a watercraft.
 - 1) Self-Launch where the watercraft is launched using a private vehicle
 - 2) Tractor launch where the water craft is launched by a tow vehicle provided by PWC
- Vehicles and trailers used for self-launch are to be parked on the beach / designated trailer park as demarcated by PWC from time to time.
- Vehicles that are unable to self-launch watercraft are to use available off beach parking
- Trailers without vehicles are also to be parked on the beach / designated trailer park as demarcated by PWC/PYC from time to time.
- Only vehicles (4x4) for the purpose of launching a boat are allowed on the beach. Social driving on the beach is not allowed and this aspect will be controlled by the designated safety officer on weekend public and school holidays and by the PWC access control staff during the weekdays and quieter periods. The appropriate signage is erected in conjunction with existing city bylaws and SA law regarding launch sites
- The Tractor Drivers are to be continually briefed on safety and to be managed. The tractors are properly maintained.
- **Launch site Demarcation:** PWC to set up Launch Site Demarcation Signs at First Light every morning on Weekends and Public Holidays, thus separating the PWC launch area from the rest of the beach. Signage is to be erected to demarcate the respective area. **Annexure 3.** Beach users are required to respect these signs.
- The day visitors are to be restricted to the bathing area. See **Annexure 3**
- **PWC Tower:** The PWC Tower to be manned from First Light to 15H00 on weekends and public holidays in order to manage the launching and returning of boats. During peak periods, the Tower may be manned by two persons with a qualified Safety Officer on call.

- The PWC is to provide a competent person to manage the launch site from the club tower over weekends and public holidays. They are to be provided with quality binoculars and communication systems – radios and telephones. The control tower is to be equipped with both VHF and a 29MHz radio and must be able to communicate with Port Control on VHF.
- The PWC tower must be able to contact the NSRI in an emergency and must be able to despatch one of the PWC boats and / or the NSRI boat within minutes of any emergency. It should be noted that Point Water sports Club has a very close working / social relationship with the NSRI, which is critical in any emergency.
- PWC are to have a safety officer on Duty on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays, they are responsible for ensuring that:
 - 1) No craft launching before first light, unless night rated
 - 2) the no-wake exclusion zone is enforced
 - 3) Jet Skis are under control
 - 4) On busy days with the Safety Officers discretion boats are flagged onto the beach
 - 5) Radios, safety equipment are checked
 - 6) Bathing and pedestrians inside the designated launch area are controlled.
 - 7) No bathing is permitted in the launch area whatsoever. The area is demarcated by boards on the beach.
 - 8) Public are kept clear of the designated launch area – to control children and dogs when passing through the area
- All motorised craft launching need to sign the launch register before launching and on return so that a log can be kept of craft that have launched and have yet to return. This needs to be done accurately and legibly. The launch register is situated in the launch control and security room of the PWC.
- During Sailing regatta's, PYC will operate a launch and return tally system to ensure the safe return of all competitors.
- Communication: All Skippers of motorised craft are to be in radio communication with the Tower in order to obtain permission to Launch or return. Boats will be refused permission to launch if they do not have a working radio.
- All motorised craft must communicate, (radio check), when launching, (radio in), and before beaching in order to obtain permission to beach.
- Night boat anglers are required to have the necessary qualifications to launch after dark. The vessel needs to be night rated as well as the skipper. A few night rated ski-boats launch and beach in the dark and special consideration is to be taken by the relevant DSBC members regarding the safety of other beach users when using the beach at night. Vetch's Beach is a designated sheltered launch site and one of the few sites on the KZN Coast where ski-boats are permitted to launch and beach in the dark.

- Ski boats and Jet Skis generally launch between first light and 07h00. The launching site is determined first thing in the morning and signage erected to demarcate the area. Beach users respect these signs at present but may become a problem as the beach becomes more popular.
- **Motorised Craft entering the beach:** During busy period such as a fishing competition, a dedicated “Flag Man”, (or two during peak periods), may be required to assist all craft when entering the beach from the sea. The Flag Man is to be in radio contact with the Tower. The Flag Man will be responsible to guide all craft safely onto the beach, using the flag system. Skippers are expected to confirm all instructions prior to entering the beach area.
- On exceptionally busy days a second person can be deployed on the beach to flag in the boats and generally managing the public (spectators) that gather around boats on their return.
- On returning to the launch site, only once permission has been granted to enter the beach area, may a motorised craft enter the beach area through Vetch’s Basin. They also must observe a wake free zone from the end of Vetch’s reef to final approach to beach. The wake free speed is to be 3 knots maximum up till the beaching head.
- There is a ‘no wake’ zone around Vetch’s Reef. The “block” at the seaward east end of Vetch’s, demarcates the start of the no wake exclusion zone. During peak seasons motorised craft will be required to go into a holding position to wait further instruction from Duty Tower.
- Special attention is to be afforded by watercraft skippers and beach control personnel when approaching the beach at speed as it is at this time that bathers, snorkelers, and beach goers are at most risk.
- If Vetch’s reef is busy with divers the tower is to continually remind motorised craft to be extra observant, as some divers swim between Vetch’s and North pier. Although this practice is against club rules, members of the public may not be aware of the dangers of doing so.
- Motorised craft are not allowed within 20m of Vetch’s reef. (Exclusion zone / see annexure 3)
- Divers and swimmers are not allowed to cross from Vetch’s reef to North pier (or vice versa) in the water as this will take them through the boat traffic.
- Divers are not allowed to venture more than 20m away from Vetches reef and must carry a marker buoy so that they are visible to surface craft (a brightly painted 2lt coke bottle on some string will do)
- **Surf ski paddlers** should avoid as much as possible traversing north / south in the basin to avoid the launch site. Movements should be as much as possible east / west and only crossing the launch site access at the eastern end of Vetch’s reef.

- **Seine Netters:** Although not part of the PWC, the conduct and management of the Seine Netters also falls within the scope of the beach protocol, and they are required to adhere to accepted beach operational protocols agreed to by all parties concerned in this document. This activity is viewed not only as subsistence fishing but also as a tourist attraction.
- The PWC has a working relationship with the Seine Netters to help ensure that their activities are communicated to watercraft users, especially when pulling nets, which creates a navigational hazard as the nets, at deployment, can extend up to 200 m into the ocean.
- **Swimming Beach:** Although this is primarily the responsibility of the Municipality, the Lifeguards are required to work hand in hand with PWC with the set up and control of the bathing area and bathers according to the demands on the launch site and weather conditions. For instance, depending on the wind direction, there may be times when yachts may be forced to enter the bathing area while tacking.
- The swimming beach is to be demarcated using appropriate flags provided by the municipality. There will be one swimming area located in front of the Lifeguard Tower on the promenade. Swimming beach is subject to the usual by-laws and controls implemented at other municipal beaches. However, it is specifically noted the any bathing area within the Vetch's basin will not have shark nets positioned within the basin due to the navigational hazard.
- Co-operation between beach users (non-club members) and the clubs is the most important factor in ensuring the safety and efficiency of the beach operations.
- Considering this need for co-operation with the public, the PWC is required to have a close, two-way working relationship and communication channels with the Municipal Lifeguards and Beach Law Enforcement.
- The Municipal Beach and Recreation Department, under whose jurisdiction the Lifeguards and Beach Law Enforcement operations fall, are party to the Beach Protocol and are committed to assisting the PWC and PYC with its application.
- **Policing:** The municipality through its' Metro police and Beach Law Enforcement units are to provide back up security and response to incidents on the beach. PWC will provide beachside security over busy periods to secure the vehicles and trailer parked on the beach.
- **Cleaning:** Beach cleaning is currently undertaken by the municipality.
- **Ablution Facilities:** The club has its own ablutions to service its members and there are public facilities in the vicinity of the lifeguard tower and bathing beach area.

8. Conclusion:

The abovementioned protocol act as a guide for the ongoing management of the Vetches basin and beach. With active monitoring and continuous consultation between ETM, PYC, The Port Captain and The PWC (DSBC / DUC), this zone should become a primary tourist attraction of Durban, with a reputation for safe and integrated activities.

Custodianship of the Protocols and Engagement between the Signatory Organisations

The usage of the demarcated Beach Site area described in this document is to be for the equal benefit and enjoyment of Members of all the signatory organisations.

The Representatives of the signatory organisations and their successors shall maintain regular and cordial contact with each other through engagements and resolve all matters regarding the smooth operations of the Beach Site with due consideration and care, to ensure that no disadvantage to one or others may occur.

SEE ANNEXURES BELOW

ACTIVITY

High = 3 Medium = 2 Low = 1

Activity	4-5 am	5-6 am	6-7 am	7-8 am	8-9 am	9-10 am	10-11 am	11-12 am	12-13 pm	13-14 pm	14-15 pm	15-16 pm	16-17 pm	17-18 pm
Ski boat launch	3	3	3											
Jet ski launch		3	3	3										
Ski boat return								2	2	2	2			
Jet ski return								2	2	2	2			
Yacht launch							3							
Yacht return										3				
Visitors						2	3	3	3	3	2			
Dog walkers		1	1	1	1	1								
Wind surfers										3	3	3	3	
Kite boarders										3	3	3	3	
Dive boats		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			
Paddle ski			2	2	2						2	2		
SurfSki Thursday												3	3	
SurfSki Saturday				3	3									
Seine Netters	2	2	2	2										
TOTALS	5	10	12	11	7	4	7	8	8	17	15	11	9	

RISKS

Time	Ski Boat	Dive Charter	Yacht	Surf Ski	Paddle Ski		Public – families	Windsurfers	Kite Board	Surfer	Diver
4am	low	nil	nil	nil	low		nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
7am	low	nil	nil	nil	low		nil	nil	nil	low	nil
8am	nil	low	nil	low	low		low	nil	nil	low	low
9am	low	low	nil	low	low		low	nil	nil	low	low
10am	low	low	low	low	low		low	nil	nil	low	low
11am	med	low	low	nil	low		med	nil	nil	low	med
12am	med	low	low	nil	low		med	low	low	low	med
13pm	med	low	med	nil	nil		low	low	low	low	med
14pm	med	low	med	nil	low		low	med	med	low	med
15pm	low	low	low	nil	nil		low	med	med	low	low
Volume 1 Perfect day	140	3	30	200	20		100	4	3	20	15
Volume 2 Hard East	10	1	20	20	0		5	4	4	0	0
Volume 3 Hard West	20	1	0	40	5		5	4	6	20	5

- The focus should, obviously, be on the Ski Boats and Divers, especially when approaching the beach at speed.
- The beach, (and sea), usage will always be dependent on weather conditions.



The “Launch Zone” shall be controlled by the Safety Officer and/or his authorised beach controllers who shall manage and direct launching and beaching of all watercraft. The “Launch Zone” shown in Annexure 3 is a generic zone from which all watercraft will be launched