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## Our coastal waters now have protected status

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The Cape's coastal waters have been given an internationally recognised status that will give them greater protection from pollution, the departments of transport and environment affairs announced on Tuesday.

They said the International Maritime Organisation had approved a South African proposal for a stretch of sea to be declared a "special area" under the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships.

A special area was one which, because of oceanographic and ecological factors, required special rules for preventing pollution by oil, noxious liquids or ships' garbage.

The proposal had been based in part on the fact that prevailing winds and currents carried oil towards the coast, and that there were a significant number of endemic and endangered species in the area.

The approval - which will come into force only in 2008 - meant no tanker would be allowed to discharge cargo oil residues within a 50 nautical mile limit.

Tankers docking in South Africa would have to keep slops on board for discharge when they reached port.

The designated area would stretch from the Spoeg River, north of St Helena Bay on the West Coast, around the Agulhas Bank south-east of Cape Town all the way to East London.

The statement said about 203-million tons of crude and bunker fuel was transported through the area each year.