

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

National Research Foundation – South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity

ABOUT US

The South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity (NRF-SAIAB) is a national research facility supported by the National Research Foundation (NRF). We study the full range of aquatic environments, from deep ocean waters to inland freshwater systems.

Our research focuses on ecology and conservation, exploring how biodiversity at the genetic and species levels connects with the environment. The NRF-SAIAB also contributes to South Africa's *Operation Phakisa* programs, which aim to grow the country's Biodiversity Economy and Blue Economy.

Strong support from the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation and the NRF has enabled NRF-SAIAB to develop advanced research platforms that allow us to work in a wide range of environments and made us a leader in aquatic biodiversity research.

'All our work supports High Education in training and development of the next generation of aquatic scientists and environmental managers

Coastal Craft Platform



WHAT IT IS AND WHY IT MATTERS

NRF-SAIAB's Coastal Craft Platform includes three 15-meter research boats custom-designed for oceanographic research. These boats can travel up to 40 nautical miles from the shore, allowing scientists to reach parts of the ocean that are usually difficult to reach. Each vessel can take up to 10 researchers on day trips to collect critical marine data.

VESSEL FEATURES AND USE

Each research craft is equipped with specialised tools and technology to support marine research. This includes a winch and A-frame that are used to launch and retrieve equipment such as:

- Nets
- Benthic grabs (for collecting seabed samples)
- Landers
- Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs)
- Other ocean monitoring tools

These vessels support a wide range of scientific work, including marine biology, oceanography, and environmental studies.

MARINE TECHNICIANS: KEY TO OPERATIONS

Every vessel is operated by skilled Marine Technicians who ensure its smooth operation. They are responsible for:

- Running the boat safely
- Helping researchers use equipment safely and efficiently
- Ensuring the vessel is maintained
- Assisting with collecting and managing data

QUALIFICATIONS

HOW TO BECOME A SKIPPER

To become a skipper (boat captain), you need both hands-on training and theoretical knowledge. Training includes:

- Time at sea under the guidance of an experienced skipper
- Theoretical learning in areas such as:
 - Safety at sea – understanding emergency procedures and equipment
 - Navigation and reading nautical charts
 - International boating rules and how to avoid collisions
 - Understanding how weather and sea conditions affect the vessel and research
 - Handling and manoeuvring boats in various conditions
 - Environmental laws and marine ecosystems aimed at protecting the environment
 - Complying with maritime law

You also need certifications in:

- First aid
- Firefighting
- Survival at sea

Skippers must be prepared to work in tough conditions, including bad weather and rough seas, which can make operating a boat or equipment more difficult.

SPECIALIZED MARINE TECHNICIANS

Some Marine Technicians go further by specializing in specific equipment, like ROVs or data collection tools. A background in science or electronics is helpful for this path, as the job combines technology and research.

WHY THESE ROLES MATTER

Skippers and Marine Technicians are essential to the success of SAIAB's Coastal Craft Platform. Together, these professionals ensure marine research is done safely, effectively and successfully. Whether navigating the vessel or handling complex equipment, they provide vital support to the scientific work that helps understand the ocean.



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