

RANGE OF EXPERTS WILL LOOK AT POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Assessment to establish fracking risk

Melanie Gosling
Environment Writer

THE Karoo is becoming an energy generator with new wind and solar power plants already generating electricity and the potential of shale gas from fracking in the future.

But questions have been raised as to whether the South African authorities have the skills or the know-how to manage an industry as complex as fracking, and whether the costs to society and the natural environment will outweigh the benefits to the economy and the country's energy security.

These were some of the issues raised at a meeting in the city on Friday when leaders of the Karoo Strategic Environmental Assessment for shale gas development in South Africa held a workshop both to tell the public about the assessment and to get the public's input and their concerns.

The assessment covers almost 200 000km² over three provinces: the area where companies have applied for shale gas exploration rights. Shell has submitted three applications, and Bursda Gas & Oil and Pilon Oil & Gas have each submitted one.

The government appointed the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the SA National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and the Council

The public will have sight of all the studies and can comment at any stage

for Geosciences (CGS) to do the assessment, which is based on science and examines 17 areas in which fracking may have an impact. These include water, economic air quality, tourism, agriculture, sense of place, infrastructure, biodiversity, social fabric, noise and health systems ecologists. Bob Schabas, former CSIR director of the Global Change and Sustainability Research Institute at which he is co-leader of the assessment.

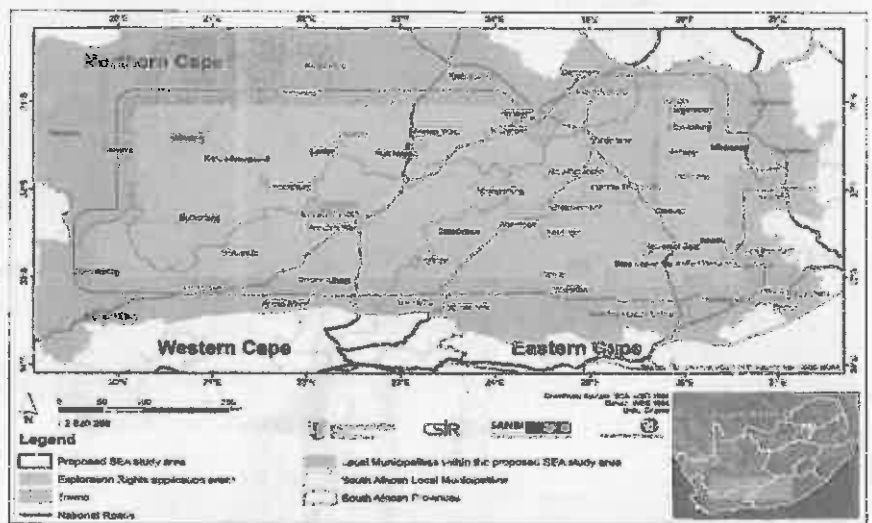
Schabas told the meeting the objective of the assessment was to inform the government about the risks and opportunities of shale gas development in the Karoo based on evidence from a range of fields. There will be more than 30 contributing teams and around 100 additional experts who will give input. A fee will be paid "a modest honorarium" but will cover no pay. The public will have sight of all the studies and can comment at any stage.

"One of the key things we need to deliver to government is to answer 'What are the limits of acceptable change?' Whether or not fracking will occur will be determined by the risk. We will make sure we give them the best possible information to make a sensible decision," Schabas said.

Some of the study areas were highly uncertain and scientific, others not. For instance social fabric. Everyone agrees it is super-important, but it is very difficult to define. It deals with how Karoo communities will be affected by things like the massive influx of people looking for jobs or with the massive money machines.

The assessment will look at the potential impacts of fracking on these areas in four scenarios. If there were no shale gas development, if there were only exploration and nothing further, if there were exploration and limited gas production of around 5 trillion cubic feet (Tcf), if there were extensive gas production of around 20 Tcf. Schabas said 20 Tcf was not considered a big resource globally, but it's 20 times bigger than Mozambique.

It is not insignificant and would contribute significantly to our energy source.



WHAT ARE THE LIMITS? The graphic demarcates the study area of the CSIR's strategic environmental assessment in the Karoo, where oil and gas companies have applied to the Petroleum Agency of South Africa for licences to explore for shale gas.

Ensuring all voices are heard on processes

Treasure Karoo Action Group

SIGNIFICANT developments in the discourse on fracking have been unfolding in recent weeks.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on shale-gas mining is well under way and a Zero Order Draft document for the assessment has been released for public comment. Public briefing sessions are to be held across South Africa this month.

Meanwhile, the national debate on fracking has gained further momentum, following public meetings on gas exploration applications in the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal. Texas-based Rhino Oil and Gas has applied for exploration rights in these areas.

Public meetings were generally well attended and feisty, with landowners and conservationists raising sharp objections to the project.

The applications fall within

Several organisations have joined the alliance against fracking

areas of strategic agricultural value and important catchment areas at a time when certain provinces, including KwaZulu-Natal, are being declared disaster areas due to drought.

Several organisations have joined the recently established national alliance against fracking – Frack Free South Africa.

“The upsurge in public opposition to onshore oil and gas drilling across South Africa cannot be ignored. When TKAG started its campaign to raise awareness on the issue of shale-gas mining in the Karoo in 2011, we predicted that applications would start to affect other regions too.

“TKAG supports the efforts of communities and organisations across South Africa to ensure a fair process and outcome on the applications. We

do, however, urge all groups to ensure that their strategy is aimed at lobbying government for change. While the SEA on shale-gas mining in the Karoo is an enormous win for the national campaign, similar assessments are required for other regions affected by oil and gas applications,” said Jonathan Deal, chief executive of the Treasure Karoo Action Group (TKAG).

“It would appear that new applicants are trying to sidestep the legal issues facing fracking by applying for a more general exploration right – simply for ‘petroleum’. Communities in KZN and the FS must be on guard against this.

“It is common knowledge that Soekor spent years drilling deep holes in the 1960s and found no oil. At that time, they

weren't interested in the potential of shale gas. TKAG sees the new, smarter applications as a Trojan horse to get in and get drilling without mentioning shale gas. South Africans must grasp the opportunity to participate in the SEA hearings and raise relevant issues.” Deal explained.

“The timing and the imminence of exploration rights expected to be granted in light of the water crisis have made it an issue that has become as important to a farmer in the Karoo as to a businessman in Sandton. Letters and requests submitted to government by TKAG and AfriForum have been ignored, and the alliance is preparing for an imminent court action,” added Julius Kleynhans, AfriForum's Head of Environmental Affairs.

For details on SEA public meetings, follow the link – <http://seasgd.csir.co.za/09-13-november-2015-round-1-public-outreach-on-the-sea-for-shale-gas-development/>

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Deathly hush from would-be frackers

2015-11-25 06:23

Lynn.Hitchcock

ANTI-FRACKING activists in Umvoti understandably are expressing the view that SLR Consultants is not been proactive in arranging a public participation meeting as required by law after the first meeting in Greytown had to be cancelled because the venue was too small.

The municipality and the *Greytown Gazette* have been in touch with SLR requesting date and venue of this vitally important meeting and are told that it is in hand.

Here's hoping for once that the cynics are wrong and that a public participation meeting will be called soon in a venue large enough to accommodate the hundreds of anti-frackers.



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Frackers saying 'frack off?'

2015-11-18 06:00

Lynn.Hitchcock

FOLLOWING the abortive meeting two weeks ago called by SLR Consulting on fracking in the Midlands, Umvoti residents are still waiting to hear when the meeting will be reconvened, and where.

In response to a query from the municipality, Matthew Hemming of SLR Consulting stated: "We are in the process of engaging with the client and the regulatory authority in this regard. We won't know the outcome for a while yet. Thanks for the offer of assistance. We will be in touch when appropriate."

This sounds very much like a politely worded but vague brush off. However, in order for the company, Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration, to proceed with any exploration there has to be an environmental impact assessment which includes public consultation.

A total of 11 public meetings were scheduled to cover the requirement of public participation in regard to the 10 000 farms identified in the Midlands by the company for exploration. In Dargle and Matatiele in particular, farmers, business people, individuals, chiefs, pupils - you name it - were all there and giving the SLR representatives a very clear indication that the answer to the possibility of fracking in the Midlands is a very serious and comprehensive "no".

From Umvoti's point of view it is vital that all interested parties keep the pressure on SLR Consulting to make sure that the obvious overwhelming negative response to fracking is formalised at a meeting with all the role players, and not just quietly forgotten.

Greytown
GAZETTE

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Fracking - money behind project

2015-11-13 06:00

Lynn.Hitchcock

IT was with great interest I recently watched on CNN a campaign against the killer whales being kept and bred in captivity in the U.S.

According to the activists, they might be providing "entertainment" for a large number of people, but keeping them away from their natural habitat was being cruel to the animals as well as to the environment.

I was immensely impressed by the conviction with which one of the activists said that by 2017 there would be none of them in captivity in the U.S.

Then I heard of the "fracking venture" in Matatiele (where I live), which would inevitably damage the ecosystem that would have a serious negative impact on all living things, converting this beautiful land into an uninhabitable wilderness.

The people who are behind the project are from the same place where people were seen to be fighting for the killer whales and their natural habitat.

Is it possible that the environment around Matatiele, with all its people and animals, is worth less than the killer whales in captivity in the U.S, or is it that some people have the privilege of keeping their own houses clean and mess up the houses of others?

One thing is certain, the people behind this venture are only interested in money – not in the environment and not at all in the people whose cry will only fall on deaf ears.

It is said "to the man who only has a hammer, everything he encounters begins to look like a nail".

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Thomas Mathew



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Gas firm deal 'fishy'

Nov 27 2015 11:30 Jonathan Erasmus, The Witness

Pietermaritzburg - The EFF has revealed that a former director of Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration is the chairperson of Denel and a legal adviser to Communications Minister Faith Muthambi.

The company is seeking permission to conduct tests before possible hydraulic fracturing (fracking) to find gas deposits in KZN.

In delivering a motion before the KZN Legislature to set up a committee to probe the ownership of all mining companies in the province and whether they moved profit offshore illegally, EFF MPL Vusi Khoza said the awarding of nearly five million hectares of land to Rhino for exploration "stinks".

"The company is owned by a Texas-based lawyer, one Patrick James Mulligan and his partner, one Louis Phillip Steyn, a South African based in Cape Town. Digging further, you find very interesting links to these owners of this company. One of the partners who resigned recently is a lawyer, Lungisani Daniel Mantsha. Who is he? He is a legal adviser to Muthambi and he is the executive director and current chairperson of Denel," said Khoza.

According to company records, Mantsha was a director but he resigned on the same day he was appointed.

But while the motion was dismissed by the majority ANC, Khoza said miners should be cautious.

"We have to warn all roleplayers in this matter that our people's patience has been stretched to the limit, and they won't be forever patient when their God-given wealth is pillaged right under their feet, so to speak."



There was toyi-toying and a picket outside the Greytown Lodge, the venue where a public consultation meeting was expected to be held to discuss the exploration of oil and gas. (Ian Carbutt)

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He said it is a known fact that mining companies operating in KZN "expatriate their profits" out of the country "to be stashed in offshore accounts in rogue tax haven countries".

Rhino has been awarded multiple exploration rights throughout the country by the Petroleum Agency of South Africa. These include 1,5 million hectares surrounding Pietermaritzburg and a yet to be disclosed area of 3,2 million hectares of land believed to lie within the Ingonyama Trust, which is controlled by the Zulu Royal Household.

"They [Rhino] were given rights everywhere including the Western Cape coast, KZN and the Free State. Something somewhere is rotten and it stinks. We need to investigate," said Khoza.

• jonathan.erasmus@witness.co.za

RHINO South Africa's corporate office, according to its website, is in the British Virgin Islands, a tax haven with lax controls on financial reporting.

The address for its corporate office is a PO Box address, which belongs to a company called Trident Trust — a company that sets up and holds companies on the island. According to Trident Trust, British Virgin Island rules do not tax any offshore profits, there are no exchange controls, it takes only a day to set up a company and requires no public filings or annual return filings. Furthermore it requires no company secretary, no directors and no meetings, while board meetings and administration can take place anywhere in the world.

Its U.S. operational office, Rhino Resources (USA) Inc. is based in Dallas, Texas, at the same address of the Mulligan Law Firm, which boasts of being as one of the largest law firms in the U.S.

However, the U.S. firm is registered in Las Vegas, Nevada, which is a U.S.-based tax haven with opaque company disclosure rules. For instance Rhino Resources (U.S.) owner, lawyer Patrick Mulligan, is registered as the firm's president, secretary, treasurer and director. No company records for the British Virgin Islands corporate headquarters were publically available.

The Witness

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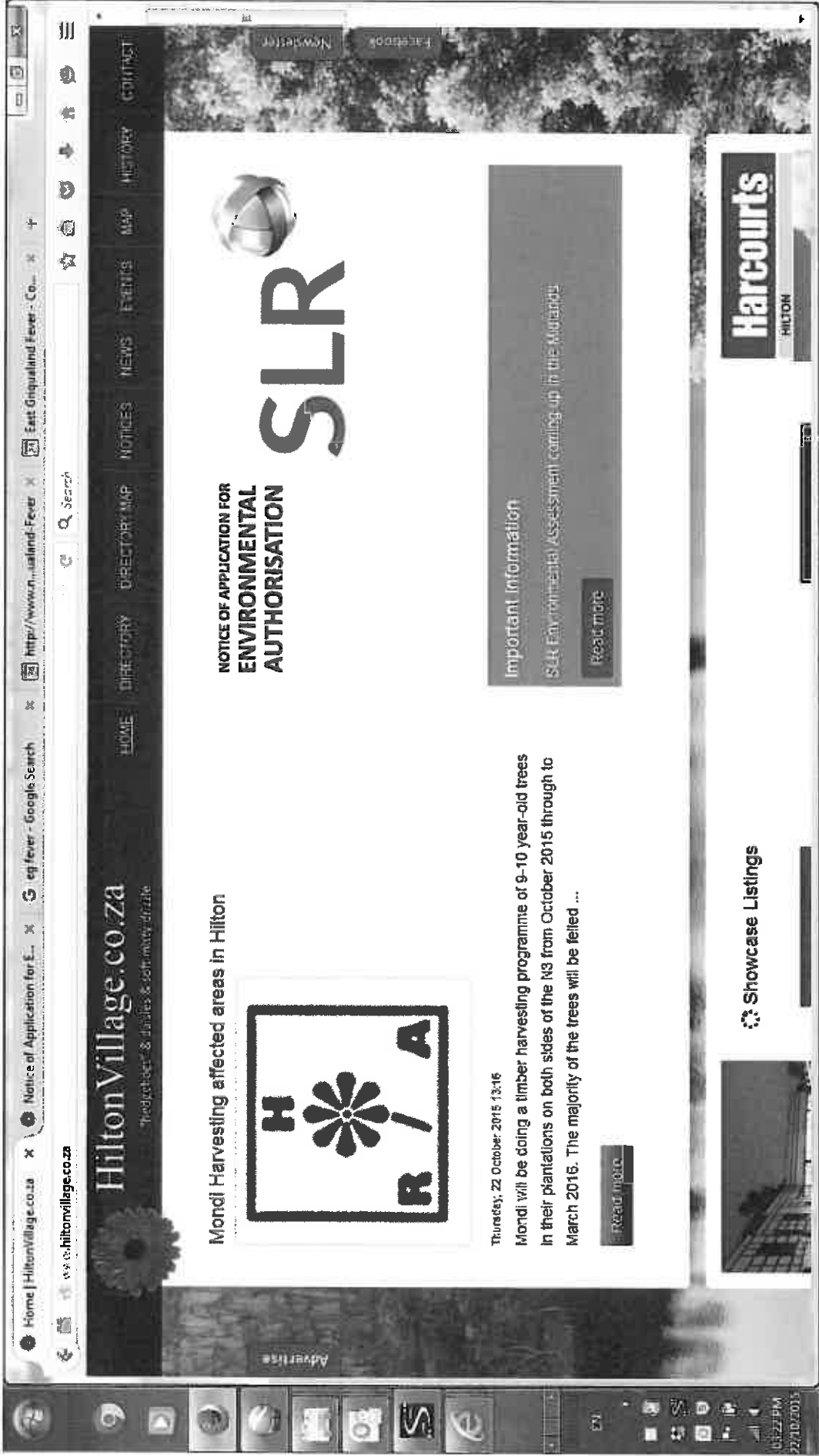
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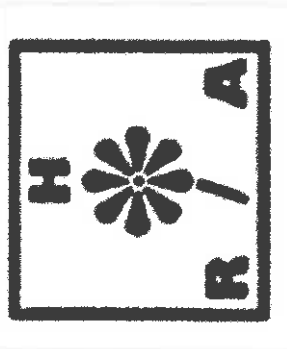


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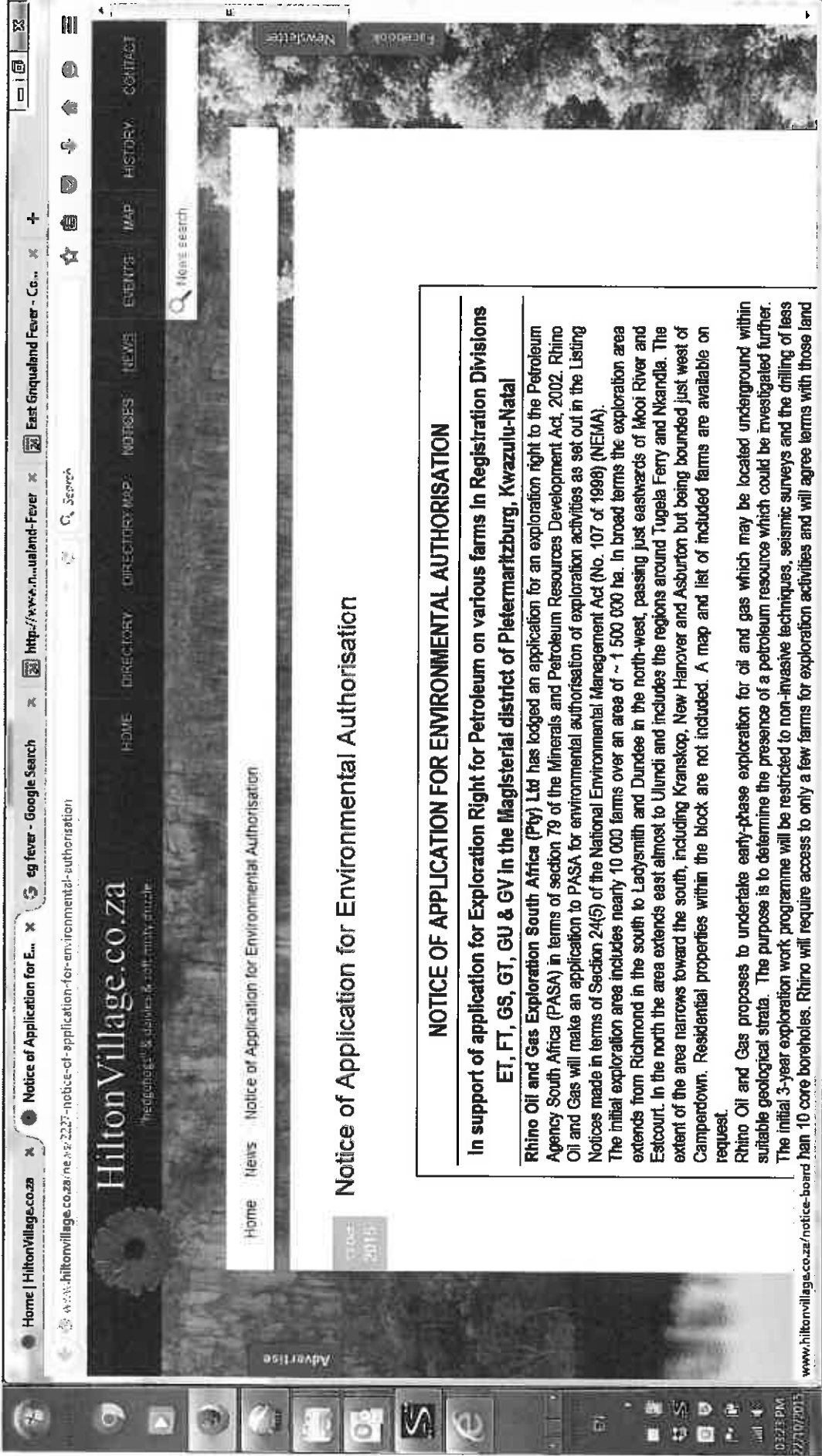
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Notice of Application for Environmental Authorisation

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Notice of Application for Environmental Authorisation

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORISATION

In support of application for Exploration Right for Petroleum on various farms in Registration Divisions

ET, FT, GS, GT, GU & GV in the Magisterial district of Plettermaritzburg, Kwazulu-Natal

Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration South Africa (Pty) Ltd has lodged an application for an exploration right to the Petroleum Agency South Africa (PASA) in terms of section 79 of the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act, 2002. Rhino Oil and Gas will make an application to PASA for environmental authorisation of exploration activities as set out in the Listing Notices made in terms of Section 24(5) of the National Environmental Management Act (No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA). The initial exploration area includes nearly 10 000 farms over an area of ~ 1 500 000 ha. In broad terms the exploration area extends from Richmond in the south to Ladysmith and Durdee in the north-west, passing just eastwards of Mooi River and Estcourt. In the north the area extends east almost to Ulundi and includes the regions around Tugela Ferry and Nkandla. The extent of the area narrows toward the south, including Kranskop, New Hanover and Asburton but being bounded just west of Camperdown. Residential properties within the block are not included. A map and list of included farms are available on request.

Rhino Oil and Gas proposes to undertake early-phase exploration for oil and gas which will be located underground within suitable geological strata. The purpose is to determine the presence of a petroleum resource which could be investigated further. The initial 3-year exploration work programme will be restricted to non-invasive techniques, seismic surveys and the drilling of less than 10 core boreholes. Rhino will require access to only a few farms for exploration activities and will agree terms with those land



GAS EXPLORATION PLANS ANNOUNCED

Farmers fear possibility of fracking in province

Tony Carnie

A TEXAS-based petroleum exploration company has announced plans to hunt for gas and oil in a vast swathe of central KwaZulu-Natal farming land stretching from Richmond in the south to Nkandla in the north.

The Rhino Oil and Gas exploration covers nearly 10 000 farms or about 16% of the surface area of KwaZulu-Natal.

Although the company carefully avoids any mention of "fracking" in the exploration phase, Rhino environmental consultant Matthew Hemming confirmed that hydraulic rock fracturing (fracking) could not be ruled out if the company found commercial reserves of gas, methane or helium.

Fracking is a term that describes the artificial fracturing and shattering of underground rock to extract methane and other gases by pumping a high-pressure mixture of water, toxic chemicals and sand up to 6km below ground level.

Towns falling within or just on the border of the exploration area include Pietermaritzburg, Mooi River, Estcourt, Greytown, Ladysmith, Ulundi, Nkandla, Dundee, Richmond and Camperdown.

Farmers union KwaNalu said the potential impacts of fracking on the province's natural resources and productive agricultural land were "extremely worrying".

Sandy la Marque, the union chief executive, said: "While we face pressures of high unemployment, food insecurity and shrinking agricultural land, fracking will not provide any solution to these challenges but will exacerbate the situation."

Vagueness

The Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry did not respond to requests for comment, while a spokesman for Mike Mabuyakhulu, the provincial MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, said: "We think at this stage, it is prudent for all of us to wait for all the processes to run their course."

Bobby Peek, the director of the environmental justice group, groundWork, said he was disturbed by the "vagueness" of information provided by Rhino Resources. "There is an element of sleight-of-hand. They are deliberately avoiding talking about fracking and don't seem to be putting all

their cards on the table," he said.

Judy Bell, a Pietermaritzburg-based environmental consultant and member of the Midlands Conservancies Forum, said: "Most people associate fracking with the distant Karoo and never thought it would happen in KwaZulu-Natal. Well, here they are now, it seems."

Rhino Resources said the initial three-year exploration phase would be restricted to "non-invasive techniques" such as seismic surveys and drilling of about 10 core sample boreholes. A series of public meetings in Ashburton, Richmond, Lions River, Colenso, Mooi River, New Hanover, Greytown and Nkandla will be held from November 2-7 to outline more details.

Two years ago, a senior groundwater expert, Professor Gerrit van Tonder, warned that large-scale gas fracking could have "devastating" pollution impacts on the country's priceless pool of clean underground drinking water.

Van Tonder, who died last year, said it could take less than two months for contaminated "fracking fluids" and other pollution to contaminate boreholes, or just a matter of days to reach the surface in parts of

the Karoo. Two months ago, the anti-fracking Treasure the Karoo Action group called on the government to reinstate the moratorium on gas exploration and production until two scientific reports were finalised by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and the Academy of Science of South Africa.

A previous 14-month moratorium was lifted by the cabinet in 2012 amid declarations by President Jacob Zuma that fracking could be a "game changer" for the South African economy. Several companies including Shell, Bundu, Falcon, Sasol, Anglo and Sungu Sungu have requested exploration licences in six of the nine provinces.

Elsewhere in KwaZulu-Natal, Rhino has a technical cooperation permit that could lead to exploration of an even larger section of land from Lake St Lucia to the Mozambique border. The Sungu Sungu group has similar interests in the northern section of the water-rich Drakensberg mountains, while Motuoane Energy has exploration interests just south of Newcastle.

● For more information, contact Matthew Hemming at 011 467 0945 or e-mail mhemming@sirconsulting.com

near KZN border feared

Tony Carnie

A TEXAS petroleum exploration company with prospecting rights over huge chunks of KwaZulu-Natal and other parts of South Africa has begun its attempt to find gas and oil in the mountains near Matatiele.

Although the company insists that the latest exploration will not involve any fracking, at this stage, agriculture and environmental watchdog groups fear that any discovery of large shale gas and methane reserves would inevitably trigger the use of risky and unconventional extraction methods such as hydraulic fracturing (fracking).

Rhino Resources, which has offices in Texas, Cape Town and the British Virgin Islands, is negotiating to acquire oil and gas concessions in seven African countries.

Its local subsidiary company has already started the environmental authorisation process to hunt for oil in the sea off Cape Town, and more recently it launched a similar application to search for gas and oil on nearly 240 farms in the Eastern Cape, just south of the KZN border near Matatiele.

Drilling

The company's environmental consultants said the initial three-year exploration phase would involve "non-invasive techniques", seismic surveys and drilling up to 10 rock core samples.

The parent company is headed by Dallas-based attorney and petroleum investor Patrick Mulligan. He is also a member of the Texas Oil and Gas Association and board member of a Louisiana fuel distributor.

The local subsidiary company, Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration South Africa (Pty) Ltd, is headed by Phillip Steyn, who is responsible for "strategic land acquisition and high-level negotiations".

It is not known whether the company has local empowerment partners. The Umz-

Large areas in KZN targeted

THE two largest exploration areas in Rhino Resource's sights are in KZN. The largest exploration zone stretches from Pietermaritzburg to just south of Vryheid, including the coal-rich Glencoe/Dundee area.

The Petroleum Agency of South Africa has also granted Rhino a technical co-operation permit for a much larger belt of land that stretches from Newcastle in the east to Kosi Bay in the north.

According to the company's website, Rhino has been granted technical co-operation permits or exploration rights over more than 28 000km² in the sea off Cape Town, along with almost 74 000 km² of land in KwaZulu-Natal, the Free State and the Eastern Cape. - Tony Carnie

Imvubu Catchment Partnership Programme, which is working on a 20-year strategy to conserve water and natural sources along the length of the Umzimvubu River, is urging farmers and other groups to register as interested and affected parties in the gas exploration project.

Project managers believe fracking and gas exploration in Matatiele is incompatible with plans to conserve the area as a "water factory".

They note that the Umzimvubu is one of the last large, wild rivers in an area with one of the highest levels of rainfall in the country.

In a background document circulated earlier this month, Rhino's environmental consultants said further environmental approvals and public meetings would be needed if the exploration detected viable gas reserves.

"Rhino maintains that it is not useful to speculate on the possible future direction of the project as the range of options is vast and the available information very limited."

For more information, contact Rhino environmental consultant Matthew Hemming at 011 467 0945, or mhemming@slrconsulting.com.

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DOWN AND LISTER -
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Midlands to fight fracking

Peta Lee

Concerned residents and landowners have been urged to protest against an application for the exploration of onshore gas over a massive portion of KZN. Gas exploration is the precursor to hydraulic fracturing (fracking).

Some 10 000 farms are named in the 1 500 000ha area targeted for gas exploration by Rhino Oil & Gas, which submitted its application for an exploration permit last week. Areas include Mooi River, Mid Mlolo, Ashburton, Kranskop, Campdown and Hilton, while The Dargle, parts of Curry's Post, and the Drakensberg are also on the "hit list".

There is general agreement that even initial exploration could be detrimental to our water resources as they will have to dig wells to "explore". Fortunately, current regulations make it difficult for them to find suitable well sites. The Midlands Conservancies Forum says this area "is one enormous catchment and we believe there is no rational basis to allow exploration here".

Judy Bell, environmental consultant, said, "I am horrified we have to undergo this application process while the province is reeling from a drought. For us to survive this dry period AND stop the fracking of our precious agriculture, we must all get involved. She added rivers and

Farming not Fracking.



NO MINING THE KZN MIDLANDS

dams were already running dry. Land owners do not own the mineral rights to the land they own or use, "so have no say once the application has been authorised", she said. "Fracking will affect boreholes, rivers, streams and air quality. If the drought is causing hardship now, what will happen when what little we have is polluted by fracking?"

William Stammers, a landowner in Curry's Post, and whose farm is one of those listed among the 10 000, said: "It is bizarre that fracking is being contemplated in one of the most important watersheds of a nation

that is increasingly riven by drought. And that at a time when energy prices are at an all-time low. But they are likely to find they have a helluva fight on their hands in the Midlands."

As part of the application process, Rhino Oil & Gas will hold public meetings. People are invited to unite. An online petition on the Awaraz.org website, 'Don't Frack South Africa's Water Factor', has already gained traction, with thousands of signatures.

Landowners and citizens must register to make comment.
• Email this sentence "Please

may I register as an interested and Affected Party for the Rhino Oil & Gas Exploration Right in KZN" to - Matthew Hemming - mhemming@strconsulting.com and Stella Mookeser - mookeser@strconsulting.com 011 467 0945 (Tel) or 011 467 0978 (Fax)

- Meetings: 2 November 9.30am Ashburton Hall; 2 November 2.30pm Richmond Agricultural Hall; 3 November 2.30pm Lion's River Club; 4 November 2.30pm Mooi River Country Club; 5 November 9.30am New Hanover Hall; 5 November 2.30pm Greytowne Lodge Hall



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911 Control Centre, PMB:
033 391 1911
SPCA PMB: 033 386 9267
SPCA DBN: 031 579 6500

NSRI: 031 361 8567

MSUNDUZI MUNICIPALITY

Call Centre: 0800 001 868
Water: 033 392 2128
Electricity: 033 392 5098/
5096/5029
After-hours number:
033 392 5098
Traffic lights:
033 392 2205
Roads damage:
033 392 2047
033 392 2059
EMERGENCY CHEMISTS

MUNICIPALITY

Fire Department and
Metro Police: 031 361 0000
Water and Traffic Hotline:
080 131 3013
Electricity Contact Centre:
080 131 3111
Health Complaints Hotline:
031 311 3555
Roads damage:
080 131 3013
Durban Transport Bus
Routes: 031 309 3250
For People Mover (Inner
City Bus service):
031 309 2731 or
031 309 2730

8 25 27 37 42 46 + 41
POWERBALL
 28 34 41 42 45 + 8

**LOWER BACK PAIN:
HOW TO AVOID IT**
HEALTH: PAGE 7



BO GOES VIRAL
... to stop the assault. The
... filming the video also laughs
... the boy is tormented.
... Thusi said: "I am horrified, I
... have that a woman can
... such cruelty to a child. The
... is brutal and it was clearly
... to cause serious damage to
... I honestly hope she is
... with attempted murder ..."
... woman has been arrested
... the boy's foster mother opened
... against her. The boy has been
... a place of safety. — WR.

Dubious gas rights deal

One-man firm gets huge exploration rights

**AMIL UMRAW,
VUSI MTHALANE and
JONATHAN ERASMUS**

A ONE-MAN show run from a shared office block in Cape Town has obtained the largest exploration rights in Kwa-Zulu-Natal.

Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration South Africa, which has its corporate office in the known tax haven of the British Virgin Islands, and with no known black economic empowerment partner, has landed not only a 1.5-million hectare exploration right in KZN, but similar rights in the Free State and Eastern Cape covering 73 876 km². The company also boasts off-shore rights in Namibia, the Western Cape and Senegal.

With the multinational subsidiary's notice of application for environmental authorisation lambasted in the media recently, environmentalists have hit back, citing the vagueness surrounding the exploration as a major cause of concern. *The Witness* has since found that Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration South African director Phillip Steyn operates from a single office in Cape Town's Icon Building, with no secretary and works off a Gmail account.

The Witness tried to contact Steyn several times via telephone, SMS and e-mail over a period of three days. However, he could not be reached. The company had recently lodged an application for an exploration right with Petroleum Agency South Africa (Pasa).

Oil, gas, condensate, coal bed methane, helium and biogenic gas are some of the minerals the exploration hopes to uncover through seismic surveys and drilling planned for three years.

The company has maintained that fracking is not envisaged.

Pasa was contacted and after initially apologising for not answering several questions, no response was submitted before print deadline yesterday. The Department for Mineral Resources also referred *The Witness's* queries from one person to another, and they too could not meet the deadline for response.

The exploration in KZN will include approximately 10 000 farms in areas like Richmond, Ladysmith, Dundee, Mooi River, Estcourt, New Hanover, Ashburton, Ulundi and Nkandla.

Environmentalists have slammed the move over concerns of potential fracking that may lead to widescale damage to the ecosystem. KZN-based NPO groundWork's Bobby Peek said Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration have been "minimalistic" on what they intend to do if valuable minerals are found in KZN. "They [Rhino] might say there is no possibility of fracking, but what they are looking for could be fracked in the future," Peek said.

Peek added even though farmers have a say in terms of negotiating drilling on their farms, farmers who have not applied for the rights to mine on their farms or have not used their right, could be overpowered by anyone who obtains the permission to do so.

Acting chair of the Midlands Conservancy Forum Sarah Allan said they are concerned about the affect of the exploration on key water resources in KZN.

"The drilling has potential for a huge impact on the quality, and quantity of underground water resources which will in turn have a catastrophic impact on local agriculture," Allan said.

SCARCE WATER VERSUS JOBS

The Umzimvubu Catchment Partnership (UCP), an alliance of 34 local communities with straddles KZN and the Eastern Cape says it believes if Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration South Africa is granted permission to proceed with the early-phase exploration, it will lead to hydrological fracturing.

"We need farming, not fracking," said UCP secretary Nicky McLeod, who is also an environmental scientist.

The mountains where the exploration is set to take place form part of the Drakensberg range bordering Lesotho. According to the map that is part of Rhino's application, the area to be explored goes right up to the Ongeluksnek Wetlands which McLeod says replenish underground water for boreholes that supply water to local communities and also feed into the uMzimvubu River, providing water to many people downstream.

"The uMzimvubu system has been earmarked for a major water storage initiative and potentially even hydroelectric capacity. Unfortunately fracking and water conservation do not work together. The fracking process needs up to 20 million litres of water per fracking well," she said.

McLeod says studies done in countries where fracking has taken place show the negatives far out-weigh the benefits.

Tello Lephuthing is one of the people who support the idea of mining as he says it will provide employment and other benefits to the mostly rural communities.

honestly hope she is
 an attempted murder ..."
 an has been arrested
 by's foster mother opened
 her. The boy has been
 place of safety. — WR.

Agency South Africa (Pasa).

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Tello Lephuthing is one of the people who support the idea of mining as he says it will provide employment and other benefits to the mostly rural communities.

Pietermaritzburg

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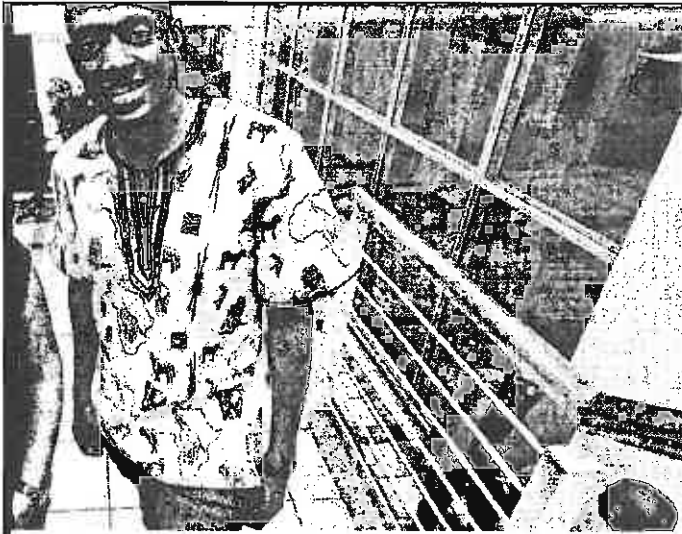
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HYUNDAI NEW THINKING.
 NEW POSSIBILITIES.

The pros and cons of drilling 1,5 mln hectares

A REPORT released by SLR Consulting, the independent environmental assessment practitioner for the project, shows the following preliminary issues and potential impacts have been identified and will be investigated as part of the environmental assessment process.

- Farm safety — access by unknown persons to farms has the potential to cause security risks on farms. Operating heavy vehicles and equipment may pose safety risks. Runaway fires may present a potential safety risks for both people and livestock.
 - Farm infrastructure — farms roads, gates and fences may be damaged during exploration activity.
 - Soil and land capability — activities at the seismic and drill sites may affect soils and land capability if poorly regulated and not rehabilitated.
 - Biodiversity — activities at the seismic and drill sites have the potential to disturb and or destroy vegetation, habitat units and related ecosystem functionality, including the disturbance of protected species.
 - Surface water — the proposed activities at the seismic and drill sites has the potential to pollute surface water resources through consumptive use and the discharge of contaminants.
 - Groundwater — the proposed drilling has the potential to consume and contaminate groundwater resources, which could impact availability to other groundwater users and the ecosystem.
 - Air — the proposed project has the potential to contribute to air pollution, particularly through dust emissions from vehicles on gravel roads and the release of gas from boreholes.
 - Noise and vibrations — the proposed project has the potential to cause noise pollution during drilling activities. Seismic surveys may cause damage to structures and disturb livestock and wildlife.
 - Socio-economic — the project has very limited potential to contribute towards socio-economic impacts, mainly because local people do not have the scarce skills required and migrant labour will have to be imported.
- While positive impacts include job creation and stimulation of the local and regional economy, the potential negative socio-economic impacts include potential for increased crime, spread of disease and pressure on support services provision.



can Leaders alumni Candice Potgieter and Hlanganani Gumbi have programme. PHOTO: IAN CARBUTT

who addressed them in a town
5 alumnus Hlanganani Gumbi,
nzini, said the programme gave
opportunity to meet people
doing "big things".
Democratic Alliance MPL said
people including Congress-
Sheila Jackson Lee, a member
Democratic Party.
bi, whose 2014 application was
ssful, said re-applying for the
programme was worth it.

"What I really like about the pro-
gramme is that it is tailored to meet
each individual's needs.
"Because I was doing Public Man-
agement, I was based in the office of
a mayor who was the mentor in charge
of the African programme," he said.
Having recently returned from a six-
month stint at Howard University,
Washington, Gumbi said he would
jump at the opportunity to go back.
• sabelo.nsele@witness.co.za

tions after barbaric run

the school corridors on their
of classes. However this year,
O boys were injured and at least
pitalised.
mother said her son was pushed
embankment and hit his back
oulder.
was so badly hurt that his friends
help him up and take him to the
My son said the teacher used
purple medicine on his bruises
n gave him two Panados before
him on his way," said the moth-
said when her son arrived at
e was "crying with pain" and
mediately rushed him to Medi-
hospital in Payn Street.
doctors found a trace of blood
rine so we were worried about
eys. He has been in consultation
eurosurgeon, undergone an ul-
d and x-ray and is now seeing
otherapist," said the mother.
aid the physiotherapist said her
juries were similar to a slipped
son was my priority when all
pened, but now that he has been
ged I have had time to think. He
n a statement to the police and
assault was opened at the Alex-
police station. I must add my dis-
ment in the school since no one

bothered to contact us when the injury
occurred. And still, even after I notified
the school that my son was hospital-
ised, no one contacted us," added the
mother.
She said her son described the day's
events as "shocking and barbaric".
Last week, Luman denied allegations
that pupils were hospitalised or severely
injured. Yesterday Luman said that they
were notified about the boy's hospitali-
sation after they had already responded
to questions from *Weekend Witness*.
However, he said a senior staff mem-
ber visited the boy at his home.
"The school was appalled to hear of
what had happened to this boy and, as
stated previously, does not condone
and will not tolerate such behaviour. We
will be discussing the role of traditions
with the boys," said Luman.
He added that once all statements
were received from the boys, the school
would be implementing further discipli-
nary action.
"We have not been informed of any
other boys being hospitalised. As with
the other boys that have been discipli-
ned, we will formally address any ad-
ditional evidence of unacceptable be-
haviour and are still busy talking to
those boys wishing to discuss the mat-
ter," he added.
• katherine.pillay@witness.co.za

against fracking'

Bid against controversial gas exploration in KZN

AMIL UMRAW
and JONATHAN ERASMUS

CIVIC groups are rallying together in
anticipation of trying to block plans
for the controversial gas exploration in
the province.

Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration
South Africa, which has secured explo-
ration rights totalling 1,5 million hec-
tares of farmland in the heartland of
KwaZulu-Natal including Pietermar-
itzburg, the Midlands and towards
Ladysmith, is expected to begin next
month with a series of public consulta-
tion meetings as required under South
Africa's stringent environmental laws.

While the company has said
through their environmental consult-
ants SLR Consulting, they aren't pro-
posing the use of hydraulic fracturing
or "fracking" for the exploration pro-
cess, a groundswell of opposition since
the company announced its intentions
last week, has grown exponentially.

The Witness previously revealed
that Rhino, which has landed explora-
tion rights totalling more than
73 000 km² countrywide, is registered
in the tax haven of the British Virgin
Islands and is run by just one man
called Phillip Steyn from a shared of-
fice block in Cape Town. Repeated dai-
ly attempts to get comment from Steyn
have been unsuccessful.

Francios du Toit, the CEO of Pieter-
maritzburg-based African Conserva-
tion Trust, said he anticipated groups
from a wide spectrum to put up their
opposition against the exploration.

"The public consultation process is
merely a tick the box exercise. We need
to be unified in our vision to make sure
we do not overlap. The area being ex-
plored is about 20% of the province.
This is a health, environmental and so-
cial issue. We anticipate interest from
a wide spectrum of groups from farm-
ing to church-based organisations as
well as the larger organisations," said
Du Toit, adding that because of the size
of the exploration area there was a
need to have local groups at all 11 meet-
ings beginning on November 2.

Operating under the name of the
Sustainable Alternatives to Fracking

THE public outcry has led to an
online petition gaining almost
1 000 votes to stop the intended
gas exploration in KZN.

Environmentalist Nicky McLeod
created the appeal, entitled
"Don't Frack South Africa's Water
Factory" on popular community
petition website Avaaz.org.

By the time *The Witness* went
to print yesterday, 890 signatures
voted against the three-year ex-
ploration, some of which were
signed by foreigners from Ireland
and the United Kingdom.

Once complete, McLeod, who is
campaigning against fracking in
the Eastern Cape's Matatiele,
plans to deliver the petition to na-
tional minister of water and sani-
tation Normula Mokoanya.

"Fracking requires about
20 million litres of water for each
drill site. Few people will have ac-
cess to the skilled job require-
ments and thousands of rural
people may be adversely affected
through compromised health and
farming," the petition reads.

"We need renewable energy,
not short-term fossil fuel extrac-
tion at the expense of our water
and well-being."

and Exploration (Safe) Alliance, an
e-mail forum yesterday e-mailed
points the public should ask the con-
sultants at the public meetings and of-
fered advice on how to grow support
against the fracking.

This includes a focus on health,
hosting information sessions, creating
a strong online presence and possibly
obtaining an urgent court interdict to
stop the entire process. One of the key
strategies is to make it a "moral victo-
ry" while including the historical value
to land, such as whether it is sacred.

The Witness has continued, since
last week, to seek comment from both
the Petroleum Agency of South Africa
and the Department of Mineral Re-
sources, however, at the time of going
to print no response was forthcoming.



arrested for various crimes, includ-
ing murder, possession of householding

Picket at fracking meet

Fracking is the 'biggest environmental, socio-economic threat' to KZN



JONATHAN ERASMUS

A COMPANY seeking to explore a vast swathe of the province for potential oil and gas reserves had to cancel its Greytown meeting because the venue was too small.

Approximately 250 people arrived at the Greytown Lodge, which only had capacity for about a quarter of the crowd, forcing Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration South Africa to cancel the meeting over safety concerns.

There has been mounting concern that the exploration will lead to hydraulic fracturing, also known as fracking, which is a largely untried form of gas extraction.

Environmental consultant Matthew Hemming, acting on behalf of Rhino, said they would need to find an alternative date and venue and readdress the community engagement session.

"[The venues for] two meetings we have held this week have been inadequate. We did try to initially book the Town Hall but we were told it was booked. We must make sure our next venue is over-sized," said Hemming.

Speaking after the meeting he said the reception they have received at the seven previous meetings has objection to the proposed future project. "The process involves multiple steps, however [the public] are objecting and [trying to] shut the door as early as possible," said Hemming.

He said only at Taylor's Halt did they have a poor attendance.

Rhino COO Phillip Steyn said he understands the emotion but while he un-

derstands that objectors believe in what they are doing, he believes in what he is doing.

"It is unfortunate we couldn't meet today but we will make sure we find an adequate venue," said Steyn.

Newly appointed president of the provincial agricultural union KwaMulu Andy Buchan said he was "disappointed" that the meeting didn't go ahead.

"This is the single biggest environmental and socio-economic threat to the province and country. Our water is what drives this economy. We are strongly opposed to any exploration or mining," said Buchan.

He said the union held a "special meeting" recently calling in leaders from throughout the province to discuss the potential effects of fracking.

"There is a meeting [today] in Tugela Ferry. We have notified the local amakhosi in the region who are equally concerned," said Buchan.

The hall was packed with farmers, business owners, labourers, pensioners and the youth including a contingent from Fernsmeatsburg School.

Rhino, a Texas-owned company with its corporate offices in the tax haven of the British Virgin Islands, has applied to the Petroleum Agency of South Africa to explore 1,5 million hectares, including 10 000 farms, near Pietermaritzburg, Ladysmith and Nkandla, looking for natural gas deposits in the main, and minerals. But in order for the company to proceed, it needs to present the agency with an environmental impact assessment which includes public consultation.

There was toy-toying and a picket outside the Greytown Lodge, the venue where a public consultation meeting was expected to be held to discuss the exploration of oil and gas.

PHOTO: IAN CARBUTT



Environmental consultant Ntsake Baloyi.

PHOTO: IAN CARBUTT



Environmental consultant Matthew Hemming had to cancel the meeting over safety concerns.



Over 200 Greytown residents attended a public consultation meeting about the possible exploration of the area for gas and oil yesterday. The meeting was cancelled because the venue was too small.

PHOTO: IAN CARBUTT



Emotions ran high at the Greytown public consultation meeting over the possibility of oil and gas exploration.

PHOTO: IAN CARBUTT

Probe into second video allegedly showing suspect shot at by cops

JOHANNESBURG — Gauteng police say they are investigating a second video of a suspected robber who was shot by police in Dlamini, Soweto, at the weekend.

"The man was taken to hospital with gunshot wounds to his arm and was charged with possession of stolen property," spokesperson Nomolo Kweza said.

The incident happened during the early hours of Saturday morning. Police were allegedly chas-

ing the man, who had allegedly hijacked and shot someone, from Bertrams, in central Johannesburg, to Soweto.

Kweza said the man's family had opened a case and that the docket was handed over to the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID).

Gauteng provincial commissioner Lieutenant-General Lesetja Motluba appointed a team to investigate the matter, Kweza said.

The video recording had not yet been seen by

News24.

The incident comes days after four police officers linked to the killing of a suspected criminal in cold blood were arrested and charged with murder in Krugersdorp, west of Johannesburg, on Monday.

The officers, three men and a woman, allegedly shot and killed Kimlekani Mpanza on October 19.

The *Sunday Times* reported at the weekend it had closed circuit television (CCTV) footage of

Mpanza being shot in the arm while running away after he allegedly fired shots at a police van.

He drops his firearm and falls on the pavement where a policeman allegedly shoots him. Another policeman allegedly approaches Mpanza and kicks him.

Then another shot — apparently to the head — is fired and he is dead. The four have since been handed notices of intention to suspend them. — News24

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The Witness

PE's 'road rage dad', victim still unidentified

PORT Elizabeth police have no record of a road rage assault involving two men which was caught on film on Monday.

Footage of the incident surfaced on Tuesday and showed a man beating another at the roadside while paramedics and other bystanders looked on.

While a man covers and tries to shield himself by hiding behind a traffic light-

pole, his attacker can be heard saying, "I will f---ing f---k you up..."

The alleged aggressor in the incident had purportedly rushed to the scene after his daughter had been involved in an accident.

Paramedics who witnessed the incident had told how the alleged aggressor had become enraged after a man who crashed

into his daughter's car refused to get out of his vehicle and supply his details.

Police spokesperson Captain Sandra van Rensburg had said that no cases of assault had been registered by the parties, but that police were "looking into" the matter. Both men remain unidentified at this point.

— News24

Kwanalu preps farmers on fracking

The KZN Agricultural Union, Kwanalu, took a proactive stance against the proposed Notice of Application for an exploration right by the Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration South Africa (Pty) Ltd in the province, and called a special meeting, which took place in Pietermaritzburg for the chairpersons of all KZN Farmers' Associations.

The proposed exploration will affect an area of 1 500 000ha and nearly 10 000 farms in central KZN. The purpose of the meeting was to ensure that farmer leaders fully understand the potential agricultural, socio-economic, environmental and health impacts of the proposed exploration and possible hydraulic fracturing or "fracking".

Addressing the farmers, CEO of the African Conservation Trust Francois Du Toit explained the issues and impact the application lodged by Rhino Oil and Gas would have on the province, and what this means for land owners and the public.

He said the proposed exploration application is the single biggest agricultural, socio-economic, environmental threat facing SA to date.

President of Kwanalu Andy Buchan urged members to stand united with one voice. "It is important that we have the right knowledge and the right ammunition going into these public hearings," he said.

Sandy La Marque, CEO of Kwanalu said, "This is not just about saving the farmer from the possible devastating environmental implications, but it is also an issue about health. We encourage our members to attend the public hearings as a matter of importance."

Wednesday 4 November 2015 - Mooi River Country Club 2:30 pm

Thursday 5 November 2015 - New Hanover Public Hall 9:30 am

Thursday 5 November 2015 - Greytown Lodge Conference Hall 2:30 pm

For further information visit www.kwanalu.co.za



From left, Rob Stuyllon-Smith (Ingwe Farmers Association); Michael Hayward (Mount Currie Farmers Association); Robert Rawlins (Cedarville Farmers Association) and Roger Gedsmack (Forestry South Africa).

Karkloof kid

As one of the three "Collin Kids" growing up in the Karkloof valley in the 1950s and 60s, Tod Collins spent his childhood clambering over the crags of that lovely district, and his earliest schooldays there. Unbeknown to many there was once a school tucked away in the Karkloof mountains.

Under Mbona hill was the farm "The Forest," and beyond this, a rondavel where for two years, seven barefooted boys were tutored by a strict English school marm.

The two years at The Forest possibly sowed the seeds that later resulted in Tod's travels to the Himalaya of Nepal and other mountain ranges, and his writing skills.



Licence

Village Talk has been inundated with phone calls, letters and personal visits from irritated car owners.

Already annoyed that KZN's licence fees are the highest in the country, costing more than they do in Johannesburg and Cape Town, they are now even more incensed that licence renewals are no longer being sent out.

Here in Howick, as everywhere else, there is a lengthy procedure which has to be endured, and those wanting to buy their renewals are warned to take the following along with them: ID document; proof of

Midlands farmers rally as fracking threat looms

MATTHEW SAVIDES

ROBIN Barnsley was one of thousands of people who packed into community halls across KwaZulu-Natal this week in fears of fracking gripped his province.

Rhino Resources, which has offices in Texas, the British Virgin Islands and Cape Town, recently applied to the Petroleum Agency South Africa to acquire more than 15 million hectares of KwaZulu-Natal — about 10% of the province — for oil, methane, helium and other substances.

The process would take about three years.

About 10 000 farms will under the exploration area.

Rhino has also made a similar, albeit considerably smaller, application for the Eastern Cape.

Its application comes as a team of more than 100 experts are investigating shale gas exploration and development elsewhere in South Africa, particularly in the Karoo.

The government has not yet awarded any exploration rights but several applications are pending.

Rhino is one of the companies to have been given technical cooperation permits allowing it to carry out geological and seismic studies of the relevant areas.

Other companies include Shell, Fossil, Motus, Enxco, Silver Wave Energy, Bantex and Sunco.

This week, Rhino, through its environmental consultant SIAK Consulting, hosted 11 public meetings across the province.

In Greytown, the meeting was attended by farmers and environmentalists determined to fight any plan to explore.

In Greytown, the meeting was abandoned over security concerns after protests and prior to the public hearings, Barnsley, a poultry farmer in

Applications for shale gas exploration



Greater TALKIE and the Karoo. THE KAROO ACTION GROUP A PETROLEUM AGENCY

What's fracking?

HYDRAULIC fracturing, or fracking, is a process in which water is pumped into the earth's surface by injecting chemicals and fluids at high pressure during this process are released.

The gases that are released to access shale gas in the Karoo, but it was put on hold following a huge public outcry over environmental, social and economic concerns.

Darby in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands and other agricultural, livestock and dairy farmers were briefed by the KwaZulu-Natal Agricultural Union and FARMCOOP du Toit, CEO of the

African Conservation Trust, about implications for water quality in an area known as the KwaZulu-Natal's water factory. It shale gas was found during the exploration and this led to fracking.

Rhino Resources vice-president and chief operating officer Phillip Steyn, said: "All environmental concerns will be considered and addressed through the environmental impact assessment process being undertaken on the project."

The three-year exploration would "determine the presence of oil or gas resources that could warrant further exploration in the future," Steyn said.

"We won't be engaging in mining activities. We are currently seeking approval to begin the initial stages of a three-year evaluation process. Anything beyond that would be speculative," he said.

However, Du Toit said "it

they're going to explore, the endgame is to frack."

He said studies had shown that fracking — and even the exploration process — could have disastrous implications for water quality.

Sarah Allen, vice-chairman of the Midlands Conservation Forum, as well as the province's biggest water board, Inqanaba Water, agreed that the province could simply not afford a drop in water quality.

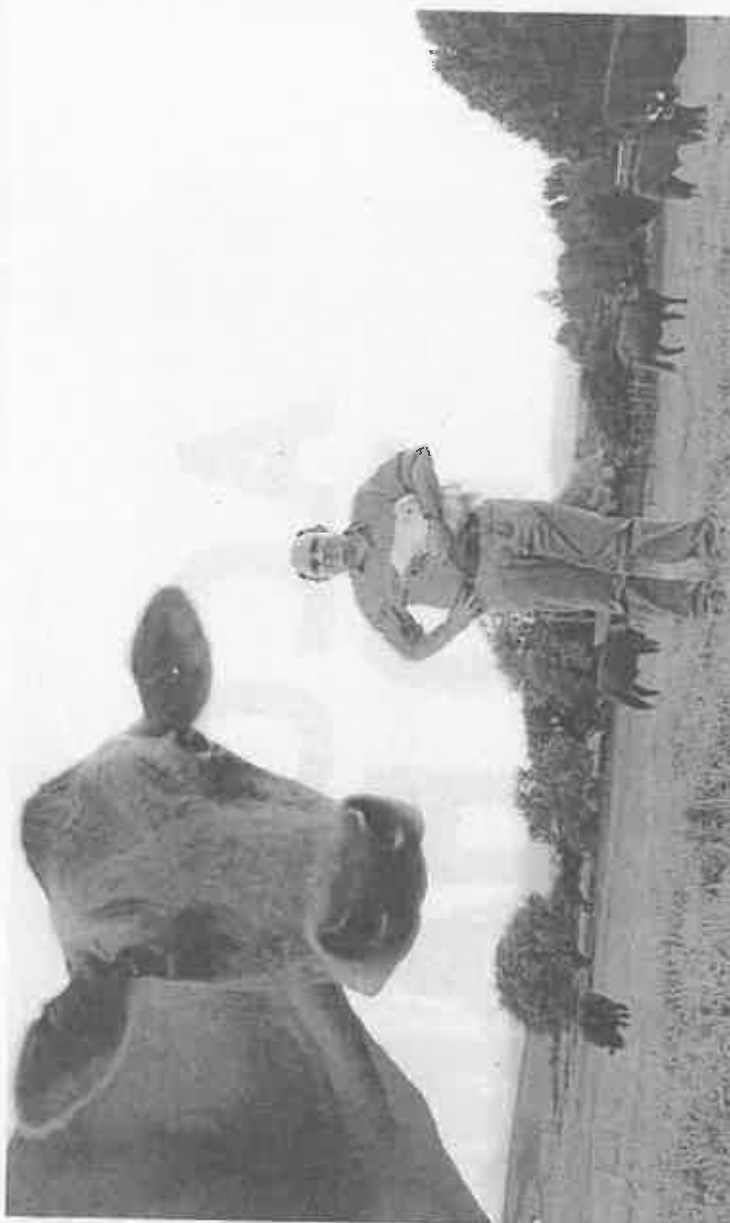
Deputy CEO of the operations at the anti-fracking Treasure the Karoo Action Group, said that five weeks of exploration or future mining and gas exploration applica-

tion, the Rhino proposal did not mention fracking.

"It is disingenuous to only focus on exploration without having the full picture in mind. Once exploration rights are granted and potential commercial gas or oil estimates are discovered, it is highly probable that production would not follow," she said.

Petroleum Agency South Africa acting CEO Viljoen Steyn said all environmental implications would be taken into consideration when making any decisions on whether to allow exploration or future mining.

enquiries@sunco.co.za



COW AND CHICKEN. Anti-fracker Robin Barnsley, owner of Sanctuary farm in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, with his livestock. Barnsley has been granted to resource companies to explore for oil and gas in the province. Picture: JACQUE CLAUSEN

Experts, state skills rallied for shale gas study

MATTHEW SAVIDES

FOR the first time in South Africa's history, five government departments are teaming up with a pool of experts to establish the environmental impact assessment on shale gas. The outcomes of the first "strategic environmental assessment" are likely to be known in the next 15 months — and according to the team leader, Professor

Bob Scholes of the University of the Witwatersrand, would determine South Africa's stance on fracking.

"This is not just an environmental impact assessment on shale gas. We hope the study will provide verified evidence for making wise decisions regarding the resources, water and sanitation, energy and science and technology also involved.

Karoo," he said this week. The study would affect the future policy on oil and gas development, and not just in the Karoo.

Started in March this year, the study is led and funded by the Department of Environmental Affairs. The departments of mineral resources, water and sanitation, energy and science and technology also involved.

an uneasy coexistence

The water-related impact of fracking is one of the biggest concerns for the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands

TIJALA BOLD-HEINTEL and SALIEM FAKIR

RECENTLY, an exploration application for a number of boreholes in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands was filed for a large tract in KZN — 1.5 million hectares covering 10 000 farms in the KZN Midlands.

The farming couldn't be worse. KZN is suffering its worst drought in over 30 years, putting livelihoods as well as commercial agriculture under severe stress. It is by now well-accepted that with climate change, the frequency and severity of droughts will only increase, requiring major investment in water infrastructure to avoid catastrophic consequences for people and animals. And in this context, the fossil-fuel industry is proposing to undertake exploration activities, which if successful, would lead to significant additional demand on the already severely constrained water sources in the region in the years to come. This has led to a legitimate massive public outcry against the proposed exploration activities.

ESSENTIAL IN THE ROOM

As gas seeks to become a major player in the global energy supply, there is growing public concern about the possible impacts on the environment caused by gas extraction, in particular from unconventional resources. These include water shortages, ground water and surface water pollution, fugitive greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, local air-quality degradation, induced seismicity, ecosystem fragmentation, and various community impacts.

In South Africa, such public pressure has led to the establishment of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for fracking — work has already commenced for the 18-month process. The SEA is meant to guide the government on some of the associated risks of fracking. However, it does not cover KZN and it is worth noting that companies such as Rimo Oil and Gas are given the go-ahead in such areas. While all the potential environmental externalities of shale gas are worthy of further exploration, it is the water-related impacts that will be the elephant in the room when it comes to the viability of unconventional gas.

The relation between water and gas essentially boils down to three questions: firstly, where can sufficient amounts of water be sourced economically? Secondly, what are the best technologies to manage, treat and dispose of fracking waste water? And finally, how do we manage short-term and long-term water contamination risks? Depending on the type of gas — conventional, shale or coal-bed methane (CBM) — these issues vary in weight but are all always relevant.

WATER SOURCING

Let's start with the issue of water sourcing. For shale gas, this is one of the biggest concerns. Although a number of liquids can be used as a carrier fluid for hydraulic fracturing, which is required to extract the gas from its source rock, water is still the preferred one. Drilling and the completion of shale gas wells usually require



KwaZulu-Natal Midlands A number of liquids can be used as a carrier fluid for hydraulic fracturing which is required to extract the gas from its source rock, but water is still the preferred one.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

South Africa, where could the water required to extract the gas come from?

The first and generally least expensive source considered by industry is surface water, where available.

In South Africa, nearly 80% of water supply comes from surface water and more than 97% of the available surface water has already been licensed for existing uses. In some areas targeted for shale-gas exploration, the availability of surface water is even more restricted.

If surface water is a resource of restricted prospects, then what about ground water? Ground water supplies in South Africa are even more limited, and anyway the two water

sources are often interconnected, so the over-usage of ground water can impact surface water resources, as well as potentially lead to land subsiding in addition, while ground-water supplies do get replenished by precipitation in dry regions this process may take decades if not centuries, so the maximum sustainable rate of extraction is not easy to determine.

Currently under-tilled water sources, such as dams owned by farmers, may seem to be an obvious choice. However, they are a critical buffer in periods of drought and may well be unable to provide this important service if tied into a long-term water supply agreement with a gas company.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

Recent technological advances have allowed the industry increasingly to reuse its own waste water, which is generated in large amounts when a portion of the injected fracturing fluid returns to the surface through the well following its completion. This water, referred to by the industry as produced water, can run into millions of litres and is high in dissolved minerals, including traces amounting to naturally occurring radioactive metals, residual fracturing chemicals and dissolved hydrocarbons. Produced water can undergo basic treatment (usually on site) and be reused in future fracking operations.

Treatment regimes have to entail bringing contaminated and even deep brine water (also a possible water source) to acceptable levels of salt concentration to ensure the chemical content is suitable for successful fracturing. Fracturing can relieve the pressure on existing water allocations, but never completely remove the demand for other water sources, simply because produced water is only a fraction, usually less than 50%, of the injected fracturing fluid. In addition, it generates other risks and challenges. Shale gas watchdogs in the US have reported a number of cases where farmers transporting fracking waste water leaked and valves were accidentally or intentionally opened, allowing the produced water to flow out onto roads and road sides of traffic accidents that resulted in chemical spills, instances where water was illegally dumped onto private, public land or surface-water bodies rather than being properly disposed of, and of on-site waste ponds having overflowed, spilled or leached into ground water and streams close to farms.

WATER QUALITY COMPROMISED

But let's assume for a moment the possibility that instead of the highly contentious shale gas, exploration activities in KZN discover the presence of conventional gas and coal-bed methane (CBM). Instead, would that mean KZN year-ends could relax? By no means. While conventional natural gas and CBM require a lot less water during the extraction phase compared to shale gas, they both generate very large amounts of waste water. In fact, considerably more than shale gas per unit of gas produced (in most gas-bearing areas). This amplifies the risks related to waste-water management discussed above. Combine this with the fact that the exploration application area is upstream of a number of rivers flowing to the Zululand coast, including the Thukela, Mvoti, uMngeni and Mkomazi, and you get a very big red flag. If the more higher risk of consuming water quality upstream materials, this can have disproportionately negative effects on downstream users on the coast, already looking at increasing water shortages in the future.

It is for this reason that gas's water challenges should not be taken on their face value — something that is purely the preserve of the water-stress situation and its economic dynamics for gas.

Saliem Fakir is the head of the Policy and Futures Unit at the World Wildlife Fund South Africa. Fakir has worked on the economics of shale gas and his work involves researching new technologies and a low-carbon transition. Tijala Bold-Heintel is an economist with an MSc in Environment and Resource Management from the Free University of Amsterdam. She has worked as a researcher in renewable energy for nearly a decade and is a senior researcher in the newly established Policy and Futures Unit of WWF-SA.



When the well is dry,
we know the worth of water.

INSIGHT

WATER AND GAS: an uneasy coexistence

The water-related impact of fracking is one of the biggest concerns for the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands

**THAÏSA BOLF-BENTEL
AND SALIM FAKIR**

RECENTLY, an exploration application for a number of fossil fuels, both conventional and unconventional, was filed for a large area in KZN — 1.5 million hectares covering 10 000 farms in the KZN Midlands.

The timing couldn't be worse. KZN is suffering its worst drought in over 30 years, putting livelihoods as well as commercial agriculture under severe stress. It is by now well-accepted that with climate change, the frequency and severity of droughts will only increase, requiring major investment in water infrastructure to avoid catastrophic consequences for people and animals. And in this context, the fossil-fuel industry is proposing to undertake exploration activities, which if successful, would lead to significant additional demand on the already severely constrained water sources in the region in the years to come. This has led to a legitimate massive public outcry against the proposed exploration activities.

ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

As gas seeks to become a major player in the global energy supply, there is growing public concern about the possible impacts on the environment caused by gas extraction, in particular from unconventional resources. These include water shortages, ground water and surface water pollution, fugitive greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, local air-quality degradation, increased seismicity, ecosystem fragmentation, and various community impacts.

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Treatment regimes have to entail bringing contaminated and even deep brine water (also a possible water source) to acceptable levels of salt concentration to ensure the chemical concoctions needed for successful fracturing can be achieved at the least cost. The use of waste water can relieve the pressure on existing water allocations, but never completely remove the demand for other water sources, simply because produced water is only a fraction, usually less than 30%, of the injected fracturing fluid. In addition it generates other risks and challenges. Shale gas watchdogs in the US have reported a number of cases where boilers transporting fracking waste water leaked and valves were accidentally or intentionally opened, allowing the produced water to flow out onto roads and road sides, of traffic, accidents that resulted in chemical spills, instances where water was illegally dumped onto private, public land or surface-water bodies rather than being properly disposed of, and of on-site waste ponds having overflowed, spilled or leached into ground water and streams close to a site.

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Ekusakeleni lalcelo Selungelo Lokuhlola Izimbiwa-phansi amapulazini ahlukehukene kuma-Registration Division ET, FT, GS, GT, GU & GV esifundeni seMantshi yaseMgungundlovu, Kwazulu-Natal

I-Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration South Africa (Pty) Ltd lafaka isicelo selungelo lokuhlola ku-Petroleum Agency South Africa (PASA) ngokwesigaba 79 soMthetho Wokuthuthulwa Kwezimbiwa-phansi Ne-Petroleum, 2002. I-Rhino Oil and Gas izokwenza isicelo esiya ku-PASA esigunyazo sezemvelo semsebenzi yokuhlola njengoba ibekwe eSaziseni Sohu esenziwe ngokweSigaba 24(5) soMthetho Wokulawulwa Kwezemvelo Kuzwelonke (No. 107 ka-1998) (NEMA).

Indawo yokugala yokuhlolwa ihlanganisa amapulazi abalelwa ku-10 000 endaweni ecishe ibe amahleka angu-1 500 000. Indawo yokuhlola isuka e-Richmond eningizimu yomNambithi ne-Dundee iye enyakatho-nishonalanga, idule empumalanga ye-Mooi River noMthetho Enyakatho, le ndawo idulela empumalanga cishe ixe fikke Olundl futhi ihlanganise izindawo ezizungeze i-Tugela Ferry ne-Ntandla. Inani lezindawo liyancapha uma seliya eningizimu, kuhlengisa neNtunjambi, uMehwathi ne-Ashburton kodwa ziphelele ngaphakathi komgqale osentahonalanga ye-Campersdown izindawo zokuhlola ezingaphakathi kule bhulohi ezifakwa ibalazwe kanye noku kwemapulazi afakwa kuyatholakala ku www.slrcounseling.co.za username 723.19034.00004 password: h5578h4.

I-Rhino Oil and Gas ihlangoza ukwenza ukuhlola kwasekuqaleni kukawoyela negesi engase lholakale ngaphandle komhlaba andaweni yemvelo efanele. Injongo ukuhlola ukuba khona kwezimbiwa-phansi ezingase zikhupoke zowaningwa kabanzi. Umsebenzi wokugala wokuhlola kweminyaka angu-3 uzogcina ngokwenza amasu angangeni ayale phakathi, ukuhlolwa kwenzo ezibangelwa ukuzamezama komhlaba nokubhola imigongo engaphandle kuka-10. I-Rhino izodinga ukungena emapulazini ambalwa kuphela uluza yenze imisebenzi yokuhlola futhi zovamele nabanikazi belawo mapulazi. Akulho ukugqibizwa nokugunyiswa kwamachwazi nganenzi okuhlongozwayo.

Lapha kunikezwa isaziso ngalesi sicelo esifanekelayo:

Umthetho	Ilgunyazo selungelo lomsebenzi esilandelela	Igama Elilawo
UMthetho Wokulawulwa Kwezemvelo Kuzwelonke (No. 107 ka-1998).	Ilgunyazo Sezemvelo semsebenzi 18 eSaziseni sohu 2 (GNR 984), lapho kuzokwenziwa khona inqubo yokubhela isimo ne-EIA ngokweZiqondiso Ze-EIA 2014.	Petroleum Agency South Africa Ref: 12/3/291 ER

SLR Consulting (Africa) (Pty) Ltd iye yaqoqwa njengomhleziyi wezemvelo ozimele obhekesele loku kuhlolwa kwazemvelo kuzungezayo nokwenza inqubo yokubamba iqhaza komphakathi. Isicelo sizoba ngaphandle kwenqubo yokubhela kwemvelo okuhlolwa komhlaba kwazemvelo njengoba kushilo eZiqondisweni Ze-EIA (GNR 982, 8 Disemba 2014) esenziwe ngaphandle weSigaba 24(5) se-NEMA. Uhlaka lomthetho Wokubhela Kwemvelo kuzotholakala ngokushesha uluza kuhlaziywe umphakathi.

Iye kwahlolwa le mithlangano yokubhela kwemvelo ngumphakathi. Bonke abaneqhaza bayamanywa ukuba babe khona:

Date	Venue	Time
Ngolwesibili 2 UNhlolanja 2016	Howick West Community Hall,	2:30pm
Ngolwesithathu 3 UNhlolanja 2016	Mooi River Town Hall, 10 Cloughton Terrace	2:30pm
Ngolwesine 4 UNhlolanja 2016	Graytown Community Hall, 61 Cathcart Street	2:30pm

Iye abaneqhaza bayamanywa ukuba babhalise njengeSanomdandla Nabathintekayo (IAP). Kumele ubhalise njenge-IAP xa ungathanda ukuhlola ulwazi olwenzakwe noma ulwazi olubamba iqhaza kwiprojekthi yokuhlolwa kwazemvelo. Ukuze uze kanjalo, noma uphakamise noma yiziphi izinkinga noma izinto ezakhathezayo zemvelo mayelana nale projekthi, sicela amla:

Matthew Henning (Project Manager) kanye/noma u-Stella Moeketsi (Public Participation) ngesifil: mhenning@slrcounseling.com and/or smoeketsi@slrcounseling.com
 ng: 011 487 0945, Fax: 011 487 0975 and/ or Post, PO Box 1596, Cranview, 2060



Sicela uzumane nathi engakapheli amavidi angu-3 kuschicilekwe lesi sikhangelo.

other vehicles, during
with binoculars
view - 52
Surrey

2ND NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORISATION & NOTICE OF ADDITIONAL PUBLIC MEETINGS

Application for an Exploration Right for Petroleum on various farms in Registration Divisions ET, FT, GS, GT, GU & GV in the Magisterial District of Pietermaritzburg, Kwazulu-Natal

Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration South Africa (Pty) Ltd (Rhino Oil and Gas) has lodged an application for an exploration right to the Petroleum Agency South Africa (PASA) in terms of section 79 of the Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Act, 2002. In addition Rhino Oil and Gas has made an application to PASA for environmental authorisation of exploration activities as set out in the Listing Notices promulgated in terms of Section 24(5) of the National Environmental Management Act (No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA).

The proposed exploration area includes nearly 10 000 farms over an area of ~ 1 500 000 ha. In broad terms the exploration area extends from Richmond in the south to Ladysmith and Dundee in the north-west, passing just eastwards of Moor River and Estcourt. In the north the area extends east almost to Ulundi and includes the regions around Tugela Ferry and Nkandla. The extent of the area narrows toward the south, including Kranskop, New Hanover and Asburton but being bounded just west of Camperdown. Protected areas and residential properties within the block are excluded from the rights application. A map and list of included farms are available at <http://slrconsulting.co.za> username: 723.18034.00004 password: hv578ht4.

In this application Rhino Oil and Gas has only applied for approval to undertake early-phase exploration for oil and gas which might be located within suitable geological strata. The purpose of the work would be solely to determine the presence of any possible petroleum resource which could be investigated further. The initial 3-year exploration work programme will be restricted to non-invasive techniques, as well as seismic surveys and the drilling of less than 10 core boreholes. No hydraulic fracturing (fracking) is proposed in the 3-year programme. Rhino will require access to only a few farms for exploration activities and will agree terms with those land owners. These locations can only be determined once the data from the initial work has been interpreted. Notice is hereby given of the following application:

Legislation	Authorisation required and process to be followed	Competent Authority
National Environmental Management Act (No. 107 of 1998)	Environmental Authorisation for activity 18 in listing Notice 2 (GN R 984), for which a Scoping and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process will be undertaken in terms of the EIA Regulations 2014 (GNR 982, 8 December 2014).	Petroleum Agency South Africa Ref: 12/3/291 ER an agency of the Department of Mineral Resources.

SLR Consulting (Pty) Ltd is appointed as the independent environmental assessment practitioner and is undertaking the required environmental assessment and public participation process. Public participation commenced in October 2015 and included a series of public meetings held in November 2015. The public response was overwhelming and very much opposed to the exploration right application. The response has necessitated that further public interaction and investigation be undertaken to augment the EIA process. The EIA Regulations provide a fixed time period for the scoping process and a time extension was required for the additional work. On application to PASA such extension of time was granted.

The following repeat public scoping meetings have been arranged in larger venues. All stakeholders are invited to attend.

Date	Venue	Time
Tuesday 2 February 2016	Howick West Community Hall,	2:30pm
Wednesday 3 February 2016	Moor River Town Hall, 10 Cloughton Terrace	2:30pm
Thursday 4 February 2016	Graytown Community Hall, 61 Cathcart Street	2:30pm

Stakeholders are also invited to register as Interested & Affected Parties (IAP). You must be a registered IAP if you would like more information or wish to participate in the environmental assessment of the project. If you have previously contacted SLR then you will already be registered and do not need to register again. To register, or to raise any environmental issues or concerns regarding the project, please contact:

Matthew Hamming (Project Manager) and/or Stella Moeketsa (Public Participation) by
Email: mhamming@slrconsulting.com and/or smoeketsa@slrconsulting.com
Tel: 011 467 0945, Fax: 011 467 0976 and/or Post: PO Box 1696, Cramerville, 2060

Please contact us within 3 weeks of publication of this advert.

New gas bid for KZN

Second company has applied for right to explore oil and gas deposits

JONATHAN BRASNIUS

A SECOND company has applied for permission to explore large swaths of KZN for petroleum and gas deposits.

Last week Sungeni Gas (Pty) Ltd said it had applied for an "application for an exploration right on various farms" with the Durbaswer Municipality near Dundee and Newcastle.

Rhino Oil and Gas, which is headquartered in the USA, is also seeking to explore vast tracts of land near Pietermaritzburg and surrounds.

According to Sungeni Gas's background information document (BID), residents within the area of exploration have until February 16 to lodge a comment or "objection".

Issued by Johannesburg-based environmental consultant Brian Winfield, Sungeni Gas is proposing to "un-

dermine a speculative two-dimensional (2D) seismic survey and diamond drilling to investigate for petroleum reserves".

The document said Sungeni Gas successfully lodged an application for an "exploration right" with the Petroleum Agency of South Africa (PASA) on November 3, 2015.

The document says the project entails exploration for hydrocarbons (oil and gas).

The "Sungeni Gas Exploration Project" covers an area of roughly 7 763 ha.

It said what could be impacted upon and what it typically 'associated with exploration activities' include noise, air quality, visual, ecology, heritage, surface water, ground water and soils.

"A scoping report will be compiled in order to provide a baseline for the

receiving environment. It will be released for a 45-day review and comment period. The final Scoping Report will be submitted to PASA for consideration on or before March 31.

Meanwhile, Rhino Oil and Gas will be hosting public meetings in Howick, Mook River and Greytown next month.

The previous meetings in Mook River and Greytown were both cancelled due to the venues being too small.

They have applied to explore 1,5 million hectares, including 10 000 farms, near Pietermaritzburg, Lady Smith and Ntshabane, looking for natural gas deposits in the main, and minerals.

According to environmental consultant Matthew Henning, the company has applied for "an exploration right to the Petroleum Agency South Africa... over a substantial area in KwaZulu-Natal".

In a letter addressed to landowners and "interested and affected parties" last week, Henning assessed no hydraulic fracturing (fracking) is proposed in the three-year exploration work programme.

Rhino has come under significant pressure at public meetings over the likelihood of the controversial hydraulic fracturing technique being used.

Henning said the previous public meetings, which included Ashburton and Ntshabane during November, "elicited significant response" but that "overall the public response was very much opposed to the exploration right application".

CEO of African Conservation Trust, which forms part of a newly formed lobby group called Frack Free SA, Rancous du Toit said he intends to attend as many public consultation meetings as

possible.

Speaking on Rhino's application, he said he "can't expect they will come up with anything different".

"I don't think they have bothered to take regulations into account. They have not done fracking is not an option. We are not expecting any significant changes. The [the environmental consultants] are simply going through the motions," said Du Toit.

Du Toit said there is "sufficient evidence" that fracking is dangerous to the health of the environment and people.

"Our other concern is that Rhino is embarking on this process of exploration and they intend to sell their bidding right to the highest bidder," he said.

He said Frack Free SA will scrutinise Sungeni Gas's application.

Thieves plunder Beacon Hill aloes

This past Sunday (24 January), a walker on Beacon Hill alerted the FoBH committee that a clump of vulnerable *Aloe cooperi* had been dug out.

It is believed the thieves saw the walker and fled, leaving the aloes neatly stacked under a tree. It looked as if these aloes were intended to go straight into a garden or gardens to be sold on, as the unscrupulous gang had been careful not to damage the flower heads.

"It is illegal to dig out indigenous plants without a permit," said Eve Hughes of the Friends of Beacon Hill Committee. "Beacon Hill is a proclaimed conservation area so we were hoping to protect the last of our endangered plants in Howick."

"This has been happening over the past couple of summers and as a result, there are only a few aloes left."

If anyone has had their garden landscaped recently with these aloes or can shed any light on this issue, please contact Eve Hughes at 083 872 4333, or Ross Haynes at 083 254 4223, or Dave Pullin at 072 692 1566.

Ross Haynes checks on the aloes remaining at Beacon Hill after insects made off with a valuable load of the vulnerable plant.



Ross Haynes checks on the aloes remaining at Beacon Hill after insects made off with a valuable load of the vulnerable plant.

Your grass cuttings could save lives

Mfundu Mkhize

Local communities can lend a hand to ease the effects of the widespread drought hampering agricultural production. Last week, AgriSa issued a clarion call to communities to donate unwanted cut grass as animal feed.

AgriSa's Dr Annelize Geldenhuys, the driver of Project Hope Grass, is exploring the possibilities of bringing it to this area. "As soon as we can set up a collection point in the Midlands, it will be all systems go," she said.

The aim is to collect freshly cut grass from suburban homes and public places. The grass will be processed and packed into animal feed pellets and distributed to affected farmers. Schools will be used as collection points.

Geldenhuys added: "The idea came when I realised how much fresh grass from lawns gets thrown away when it could be collected and turned into feed. One 50kg bag can feed a sheep for a month. This can go a long way in helping."



If you want to donate grass, phone 083-696-0007 for more information.

Sandy La Marquo of Kwanalu welcomed the idea, painting a bleak picture of the drought's impact. "The situation is extremely bad," she said. "Farmers from all areas are suffering from crop and livestock losses, shortage of water and feed restrictions. The grass-cuttings project will no doubt provide some relief, however, animals do require a balanced diet."

She warned that the costs of transporting the grass to distant areas could outweigh the value of the grass. "For this reason we suggest people assist communities bordering them," she added.

'Mining and fracking are different'

No mining the Midlands' might be an effective refrain for anti-frackers but local mining consultant Dennis Sterling (Sterling Ironworks) resents the terminology.

"If they want no mining, then all the stone aggregate quarries will be closed, the sand pits where we extract sand from rivers will close, and there will be no aggregate for asphalt and brick plants: the civil and building industries will grind to a halt."

Sterling, who attended the last Rhino Oil & Gas information meeting, said he had objected to the intolerant audience. "There were several questions needing answers. But with so much heckling, we never got them."

He wanted to know more about fracking, he added. "How much sand is used per hole, how much water. The meetings could let us know, but the rent-a-crowds give no chance for questions. If drilling leads to fracking in the long term, what type of sand do they need? Where will it come from?"

Sterling said there was little sand available in the Midlands. "Existing projects are looking at producing a concrete sand, to eliminate fly-by-night outfits that dig sand from our rivers. Meantime, these protesters give the mining industry a bad name by lumping us with these guys when they say 'no mining the Midlands'."

He hoped the next Rhino info meetings would be less chaotic.

Nikki Brighton, a concerned conservationist, said: "People don't realise NOTHING is going to be the same anymore. Industry will halt if we keep extracting finite natural resources from the earth. Even gravel cannot last forever, or pebbles, or shale, or sand - it will get used up. Never mind the ecosystems these activities destroy in the process. We must think of alternatives (eg gravel made from discarded glass)."

The next meetings:



Tue: 7 February, Howick West Community Hall, 2:30pm; Wed 3 February, Mool River Town Hall, 10 Cloughan Terrace, 2:30pm.

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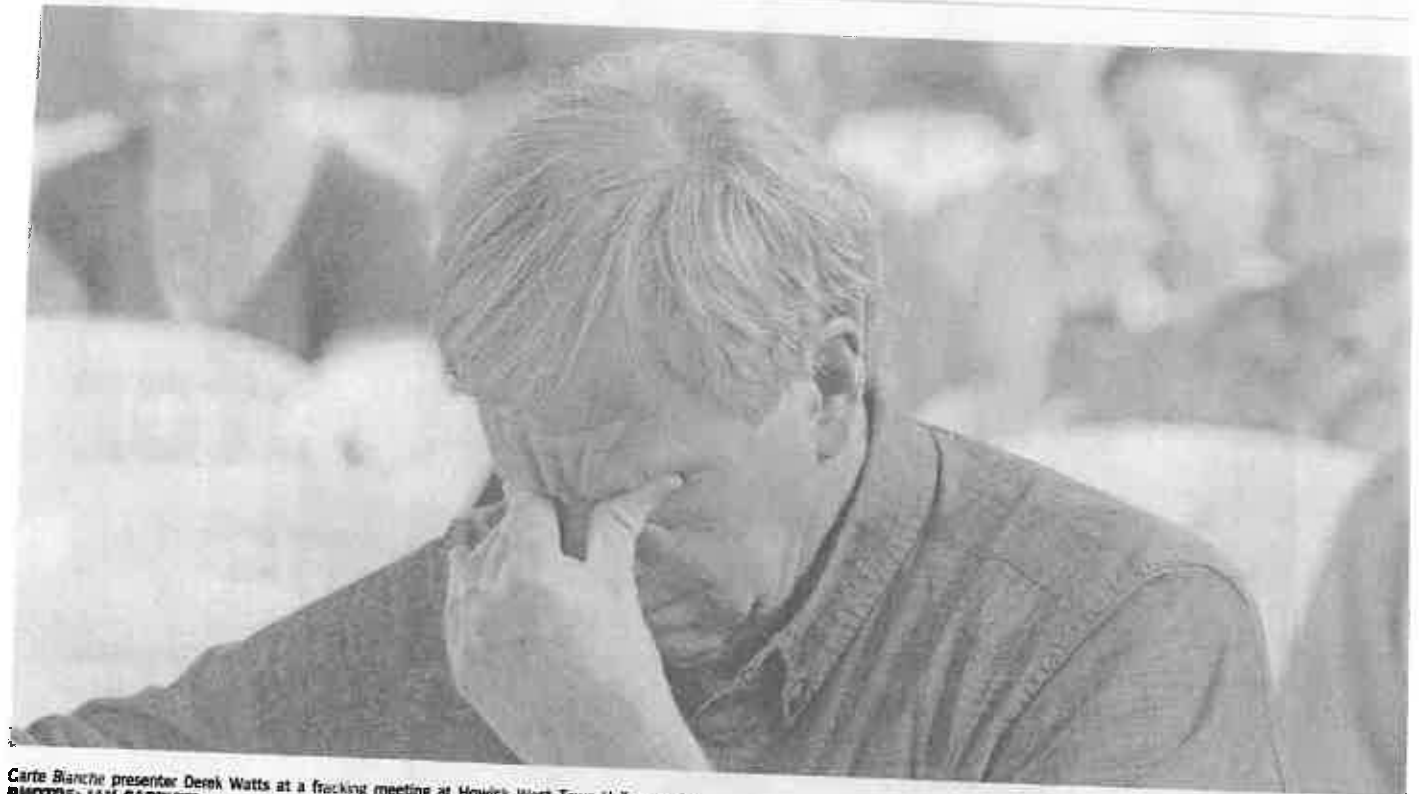
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Carte Blanche presenter Derek Watts at a fracking meeting at Howick West Town Hall yesterday.
PHOTOS: IAN CARBUTT

'Get the hell out of KZN'

Gas firm faces strong opposition to fracking at Howick community meeting

JONATHAN ERASMUS

RHINO Oil and Gas South Africa, the company seeking a bid to explore 1,5 million hectares for gas reserves in KZN, faced strong opposition at a community meeting in Howick yesterday.

But despite the vocal opposition, the company, represented by COO Philip Steyn and the environmental consultants SLK, soldiered on through the process. They eventually conceded to skip a portion of the agenda and go straight to questions and answers.

This meeting is a continuation of public meetings held last year and forms part of, albeit the early stages of, the environmental impact assessment process.

The atmosphere was noticeably tense with people calling the company representatives "killers" and "destroying the land of our children."

The Howick West Town Hall perimeter fence and building walls had been adorned with banners in protest to Rhino's application to explore for hydrocarbons.

Environmental groups remained vocal throughout the proceedings which were a stop-start affair throughout the three-hour engagement.

"I believe in something. Our country has a real problem with our consumption of oil and gas. A lot of people fight that process yet we are spending over R100 billion on just oil. If we could have



Midlands residents voice their concerns at the fracking meeting at Howick West Town Hall.

a fraction of the jobs created in the U.S. in South Africa, by developing an oil and gas industry it would save our tax and keep it in our country," said Steyn.

Steyn stressed gas and oil would provide multiple jobs.

"No single person can take a decision to stop this [at Rhino] as this would be a group decision. This will benefit everyone in South Africa," he said.

The approximately 100-strong crowd and the representatives of Rhino re-

mained vocally combative.

As the meeting progressed to the question and answer period it became gradually calmer and more technical in nature.

Stella Hlongwane, the president of the organisation Concerned Young People of South Africa based in Mpophomeni, had objected to the poor translation of material and speakers into isiZulu. He told *The Witness* the poor will pay the biggest price.



Rhino Oil and Gas South Africa COO Philip Steyn (in the foreground) was at the fracking meeting in Howick yesterday.

"The people I represent are poor. I brought goggles here who could not understand what is happening. The first time they would ever know about this is when the machines roll onto the farms. Our existence depends on water and livestock. We will be the first to suffer," said Hlongwane.

Noluthando Nzimande from the SA Youth Climate Change Coalition UKZN Pietermaritzburg campus, said the Amazkosi had been informed about

the process.

Rhino was criticised for not making any of the minutes or documents generated from the previous meetings available to those who are affected. Activist Pendo Long said Rhino was "dictating" and "not participating".

"I have a list of 650 signatures from this area from school pupils who are against what you are proposing. Get the hell out of KZN," said Long.
jonathan.erasmus@witness.co.za

Accountant who was forced to become a gardener lands his dream job

THE KwaZulu-Natal accountant who became a gardener because he could not find a proper job, has been employed by Bongani Mtolo's employer, Loynds Sibhahle.

made it her mission to find Mtolo a permanent job after she learnt that he was a qualified accountant. She met the 26-year-old late last year.

accounting homework and Mtolo offered to help.

She was shocked when she reduced the

He turned to doing part-time jobs like gardening, painting and welding and made between R70 and R100 on a week.

Calvin and Family Group in Umhlanga, who offered him a job.



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15 000 FARMS MAY BE TARGETED

40% of KZN set for drilling, fracking

Tony Carnie

ANOTHER massive chunk of KwaZulu-Natal has been earmarked for petroleum exploration, opening the door for potential oil drilling and gas fracking on nearly 40% of the land surface area of the province.

The Texas-based exploration company Rhino Resources has already lodged an application to explore for oil and gas underneath a 1 500 000 hectare belt of land that includes 10 000 farms in the central part of KZN.

The first exploration zone stretches from Isipho in the south to Nkandla in the north, taking in the areas around Pietermaritzburg, Mooi River, Ladysmith and Colenso.

Now Rhino Resources has announced further plans to explore a second belt of land covering almost 2 000 000ha and nearly 5 500 farms in the Newcastle, Vryheid, Pongola, Melmoth and Nongoma areas.

The two combined exploration zones cover nearly 37.5% of KZN's total land surface area and nearly 15 600 farms.

Rhino Resources' environmental consultants insist that the "early-phase" exploration work over three years will not involve any hydraulic rock fracturing (fracking), but acknowledge that the exploration could lead to future gas fracking and oil-well drilling if commercially viable volumes of petroleum are discovered.

rock formations, raising major concerns about the pollution of surface and underground water supplies and earth tremors.

Further concerns have also been raised in the US and other parts of the world about the potential human health impacts of water contaminated by the chemicals used in the fracking process.

Last year, the Oklahoma Geological Survey issued a public statement noting a significant increase in earthquakes and seismic events associated with the oil and gas industry.

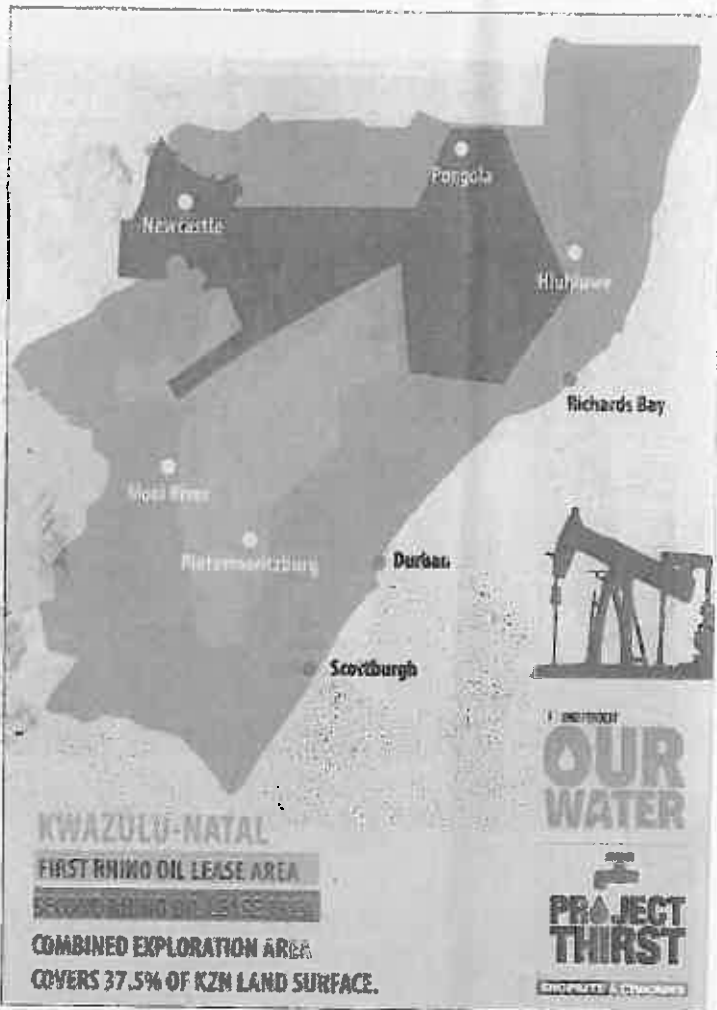
Whereas Oklahoma state had historically recorded an average of one and a half earthquakes a year with a magnitude higher than three on the Richter Scale, the Survey was now recording an average of two and a half earthquakes of this magnitude each day.

Earthquakes

"The seismicity rate in 2008 was 70 times greater than the background seismicity rate observed in Oklahoma prior to 2006," said state geologist Richard Andrews.

The Oklahoma Geological Survey said natural processes were unlikely to be responsible, and it was "very likely" that the new spate of earthquakes was associated with deep underground water injection, mainly by the oil and gas industry.

Senior officials of the US Geological Survey reached



Natal Agricultural Union also voiced strong concern about the potential impacts on farming if oil and gas production went ahead.

Jeremy Ridd, a Durban environmental attorney and co-founder of Earth Watch, said "We all understand that cheap energy will benefit our economy. But while our economy will survive without gas, it cannot survive without water."

"The current drought has had a serious impact on our

cautious and risk-averse approach to decisions that affect the environment and water resources."

Rhino Resources environmental consultant Matthew Henning said if exploration rights were granted, the initial work would not involve any fracking and would be restricted to desk-top studies, the drilling of no more than 10 rock core samples, seismic surveys and possibly sparse seismic track analysis and full ten-

taken at sites where it is lawful and environmentally responsible to do so."

Henning acknowledged however, that most people who had attended public meetings were opposed to the Rhino Resources oil exploration proposals.

He is holding a further series of public meetings from March 2-11 in Ulundi, Dundee, Pongola, Melmoth, Vryheid, Newcastle and Dannhauser. For more info

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Midlands to fight fracking

Peta Lee

Concerned residents and landowners have been urged to protest against an application for the exploration of onshore gas over a massive portion of KZN. Gas exploration is the precursor to hydraulic fracturing (fracking).

Some 10 000 farms are named in the 1 500 000ha area targeted for gas exploration by Rhino Oil & Gas, which submitted its application for an exploration permit last week. Areas include Mooi River, Mid Illovo, Ashburton, Kranskop, Camperdown and Hilton, while The Dargle, parts of Curry's Post, and the Drakensberg are also on the "hit list".

There is general agreement that even initial exploration could be detrimental to our water resources as they will have to dig wells to "explore". Fortunately, current regulations make it difficult for them to find suitable well sites. The Midlands Conservancies Forum says this area "is one enormous catchment and we believe there is no rational basis to allow exploration here".

Judy Bell, environmental consultant, said, "I am horrified we have to undergo this application process while the province is reeling from a drought. For us to survive this dry period AND stop the fracking of our precious supplies, we must all get involved." She added rivers and

Farming not Fracking.



NO MINING THE KZN MIDLANDS

dams were already running dry.

Land owners do not own the mineral rights to the land they own or use, "so have no say once the application has been authorised", she said. "Fracking will affect boreholes, rivers, streams and air quality. If the drought is causing hardship now, what will happen when what little we have is polluted by fracking?"

William Saunderson Mayer, a landowner in Curry's Post, and whose farm is one of those listed among the 10 000, said: "It is bizarre that fracking is being contemplated in one of the most important watersheds of a nation

that is increasingly riven by drought. And that at a time when energy prices are at an all-time low. But they are likely to find they have a helluva fight on their hands in the Midlands."

As part of the application process, Rhino Oil & Gas will hold public meetings.

People are urged to unite. An online petition on the Avaaz.org website, Don't Frack South Africa's Water Factor, has already gained traction, with thousands of signatures.

Landowners and citizens must register to make comment:
 • Email this sentence "Please

may I register as an Interested and Affected Party for the Rhino Oil & Gas Exploration Right in KZN" to - Matthew Hemming - mhemming@alrconsulting.com and Stella Mockets - smocketse@alrconsulting.com 011 467 0945 (Tel) or 011 467 0978 (Fax)

• Meetings: 2 November 9.30am Ashburton Hall, 2 November 2.30pm Richmond Agricultural Hall, 3 November 2.30pm Lion's River Club; 4 November 2.30pm Mooi River Country Club; 5 November 9.30am New Hanover Hall; 5 November 2.30pm Greytown Lodge Hall

Sign the petition at <http://tinyurl.com/frackingcapkzn>

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BUTTON MUSHROOMS R15 ⁹⁹ PER POUCE	BOLDER DELICIOUS/GRANNYSMITH APPLE R13 ⁹⁹ PER 250GPKG
FRESH CHIA R12 ⁹⁹ PER POUCE	RED PEACHES R15 ⁹⁹ PER 1KG
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From left: Elmarie Lourens (Nottingham Road) Val Sharp, Deneys Hatting and Catherine Rennie(Howick).

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Firm 'no' to fracking

First public participation meeting sees development company roasted



Exploration boss Philip Steyn said he didn't know if fracking was an 'end goal'.

PHOTOS: JONATHAN ERASMUS

JONATHAN ERASMUS and ANIL UMRAW

A COMPANY wanting to explore the province for natural gas has admitted that "fracking is a possible end goal"

Environmental consultant Matthew Hemming, of SLR Consulting and acting on behalf of Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration South Africa, made the statement at a heated meeting (see side bar) at Ashburton Community Hall in the first of 11 public consultation meetings being held throughout the Midlands.

Rhino, a Texas-owned company with its corporate offices in the tax haven of the British Virgin Islands, has applied to the Petroleum Agency of South Africa to explore 1,5 million hectares, including 10 000 farms, near Pietermaritzburg, Ladysmith and Naleda, looking for natural gas deposits in the main, and minerals. But in order for the company to proceed, it needs to present the agency with an environmental impact assessment which includes public consultation.

The 100-strong crowd that attended



Global environmental activist Desmond D'Sa said the miners did not care about 'our children's future'.



Environmental consultant Matthew Hemming said fracking was a possibility.



Francois du Toit, CEO of African Conservation Trust, said the environmental process was being rushed and was a 'tick box affair'.



St John's DSG Grade 10 pupil Kely Pearson read out and hand delivered a petition from the school with over 200 signatures against fracking. She is accompanied by teacher Brenda Wilkows.

PHOTO: JONATHAN ERASMUS

ter table, while they maintained the area

Finally, pushed for a "yes" or "no" an-

It was a feisty crowd at the Ashburton Hall and among them was Kely Pearson, a Grade 10 pupil at St John's DSG. She hand-delivered a petition with approximately 200 signatures of pupils at the high school, objecting to the "early phase petroleum exploration of the central KZN region".

Reading a statement on behalf of the signatories, Pearson said: "I believe the risk to soil and water health will have serious repercussions... this exploration will be the precursor to fracking in the future. I strongly object to this activity, which threatens the future heritage of our children".

There were a few heated moments during the nearly four-hour meeting. Besides an early exodus of people who called the meeting "flawed" and "illegal", a pensioner told Hemming that fracking would "take place over my dead body", to which Hemming replied "Perhaps".

In another incident, self-proclaimed spiritualist Brett Austin told Hemming to "F**k the process", as they stood nearly nose to nose.

African Conservation Trust CEO Francois du Toit mocked the "public consultation process", calling it a "box-ticking exercise", while Durban-based and globally recognised environmentalist Desmond D'Sa called on the affected population to "not even allow [Rhino] through the door" for an opportunity to operate.

"Stand up against them and organise. [For them] it is about money and profit at the expense of our children," he said.

However, there was a notable lack of representation from tradi-

OVER 2 000 people have signed the "Don't Frack our Water Factories" petition on community petition website Avaaz against the possibility of fracking in KZN.

According to Dargle Conservancy's Nikki Brighton, there is also a buzz on social media opposing Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration's application, with the hashtag #nofrackingzn "starting to appear in all sorts of places".

"NPOs and provincial residents have been registering as interested and affected parties and preparing questions to ask environmental consultants acting on behalf of Rhino SLR Consulting at a series of public meetings being held this week," she said.

Brighton said pupils from schools in the Midlands had joined in by writing letters in opposition to fracking to the government, creating posters and holding impromptu

TO FRACK OR NOT?

Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration SA have recently lodged an application for exploration rights covering an area of 1 500 000 ha of KZN.

This will enable them to do seismic testing and drilling and if permission is granted it is likely to lead to extraction by hydraulic fracturing (fracking) They would then have the mineral rights over this huge expanse of land.

FRACKING

What is it?

Fracking is the process of drilling down into the earth before a high-pressure water mixture is directed at the rock to release the gas inside. Water, sand & chemicals are injected into the rock at high pressure which allows the gas to flow out to the head of the well.

And why is it important to you?

- Large volume of water use in water-deficient areas
- Methane pollution and its impact on health & climate change
- Air pollution impacts
- Exposure to toxic chemicals
- Blowouts due to gas explosion
- Waste disposal
- Fracking induced earthquakes and tremors.
- Contamination of groundwater

The consultants have called a public participation meeting for Ashburton and surrounds at the Ashburton Public Hall (library)

on

Monday 2nd November 2015 at 09h30

PLEASE MAKE YOUR BEST EFFORT TO ATTEND – THIS IMPACTS ON US ALL.

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To frack or not to frack?



Lions River Primary School pupils show their opinion about the proposed fracking in the Midlands.
PHOTO: SUPPLIED

summing there is 570 billion cubic metres of exploitable gas — but it could be much more, and it could be much less — no one actually knows whether there is much gas in our shale, which is why exploration is needed (that's assuming you are open to fracking). Industry advocates go on to point out that the burning of shale gas produces half the greenhouse gas per unit of energy produced compared with coal, so environmentalists should welcome it. Then South Africa will reduce its dependency on oil imports, and the road will strengthen. And they say that while there is a risk of environmental contamination from fracking, the evidence to date indicates that the risk is very small and not out of proportion with any comparable economic activity.

Given this rosy picture, what's not to like? Environmentalists have a reputation for being opposed to all development, so if they are against fracking isn't that just to be expected?

Last year, three of my Duct colleagues and I attended a two-day seminar on fracking at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in Pretoria. It brought together experts from industry and environmental organisations, who gave us well-prepared presentations outlining all sides of the debate. I went to Pretoria agnostic about fracking, but came back convinced that we should not rush into shale gas development. We may yet go that route, but there are a

going anywhere. Although the price of oil has come down drastically in the past two years, in the long term it can only go up because the world's reserves of fossil fuels are finite. While we could certainly use an economic boost right now, our children or our children's children will very likely need it more than us. Why not spend the next 20 or 30 years learning everything we can about the shale gas industry from countries where it is properly managed, establishing once and for all if the environmental risks can be adequately contained. By then, the price of gas would probably have gone way up and if we really must use it then we should be able to afford to exploit it in a more environmentally responsible manner.

There is no good reason for us to rush to exploit shale gas, whether it is there or not. Our neighbour, Mozambique, has huge gas reserves and is able to exploit them without fracking anything. We should buy gas from Mozambique and support their industry, for as our neighbours in the region their prosperity grows our prosperity.

Meanwhile, concerned citizens in the Midlands, particularly landowners, should take a keen interest in the exploration process, and should keep Rhinoceros Oil and Gas under close scrutiny.

David Skill is the chairperson of the Duzi-Mngeni Conservation Trust. He writes in his personal capacity.

POWELL REPORTS
Today - 2.30 pm, Lions River Club.
Tomorrow - 2.30 pm, Lion River Country Club.
Thursday - 9.30 am, New Haven Hall.
Friday - 2.30 pm, Geyser Lodge at Hens Hall (Norman Street)

gas has all been tapped out after five or 10 years (that's how long a shale gas well lasts) and the roads are trashed, who will be paying to fix them?

Secondly, as a nation we are just not doing very well when it comes to the management of waste, regulation of mining and control of pollution. We simply do not have the capacity or the will at local and national government level to do the basics, like collecting solid waste, preventing dumping, closing down illegal mining operations (taking place in broad daylight) and controlling sewage and industrial pollution. The successful regulation of fracking would require major resources, skills and political will, which we presently do not have. Before we countenance fracking, we should be sending our best young hydrogeologists to work in countries where fracking is taking place, to gain experience in the industry and in particular in the government agencies that regulate the industry.

Thirdly, if it is there, the gas is not

of gas will be trundled out of the well fields on the way to wherever the gas will be used. With all the water trucks in and all the gas trucks out, it is debatable whether the carbon footprint of shale gas is as environmentally friendly as its advocates make out. So for those who wonder how on Earth we will survive on our roads if the number of heavy vehicles continues to grow as fast as it has been, you ain't seen nothing yet. And when the

number of matters that should give us pause for thought. Firstly, whether or not we have a significant risk to our water resources (and from my own research I am not convinced that it will or won't), an environmental reserve flow to be maintained in our rivers, then I suppose the water can be found (to the detriment of river health). Then, if a well is successful, many thousands more truck loads

require millions of truck loads of water. It is debatable whether or not we have that water to spare, but if those responsible for the management of our water resources simply continue to ignore the provision in the Water Act of 1998 for an environmental reserve flow to be maintained in our rivers, then I suppose the water can be found (to the detriment of river health). Then, if a well is successful, many thousands more truck loads

United against fracking

People's Climate March in Howick sees hundreds demonstrate against climate change

AMIL UMRAW

A DIVERSE group of environmentalists took to the streets in Howick yesterday to demonstrate against climate change.

The People's Climate March started on Main Street with about 200 concerned residents and members of non-government organisations uniting in an effort to grow awareness around sustainable energy and threats to the environment.

The crowd, consisting of all races, age groups and creeds, the group took to the streets with posters, placards and banners while beating on drums, singing and humming.

Before the demonstration, the group gathered on the lawns near the Howick Falls and were treated to impromptu poems, songs and speeches regarding the current state of climate change, the impact on the environment and solutions to be implemented.

More than 100 people also signed a petition against the proposed gas exploration in KZN which may result in extraction by fracking.

The petition was addressed to the Petroleum Agency of South Africa and various other state departments and "strongly objects" to the exploration initiative by Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration, South Africa.



Demonstrators took to the streets of Howick yesterday during the People's Climate March. PHOTOS: AMIL UMRAW

as to project a unified voice opposing the gas exploration that may cover over 1,5 million hectares of KZN land.

"Today was to show that we know solutions are available but the govern-

ment that attended as this will create awareness around the environmental ills the country faces.

"All those who turned up were so passionate and really care about the envi-

ronment for homes and businesses.

Also at the demonstration was environmentalist Nikki Brighton who said the march supports the worldwide message to leave fossil fuels in the ground

more affordable," Brighton said.

"We realise that you cannot say no to fracking without providing a viable alternative. Most municipalities want to know about job creation, so demon-

'Unite against fracking'

Bid against controversial gas exploration in KZN

ANNE UNRAW
and JONATHAN ERASMUS

CIVIC groups are rallying together in anticipation of trying to block plans for the controversial gas exploration in the province.

Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration South Africa, which has secured exploration rights totalling 1,5 million hectares of farmland in the heartland of KwaZulu-Natal including Pietermaritzburg, the Midlands and towards Ladysmith, is expected to begin next month with a series of public consultation meetings as required under South Africa's stringent environmental laws.

While the company has said through their environmental consultants SLR Consulting, they aren't proposing the use of hydraulic fracturing or "fracking" for the exploration process, a groundswell of opposition since the company announced its intentions last week, has grown exponentially.

The *Witness* previously revealed that Rhino, which has landed exploration rights totalling more than 73 000 km² countrywide, is registered in the tax haven of the British Virgin Islands and is run by just one man called Phillip Steyn from a shared office block in Cape Town. Repeated daily attempts to get comment from Steyn have been unsuccessful.

Francois du Toit, the CEO of Pietermaritzburg-based African Conservation Trust, said he anticipated groups from a wide spectrum to put up their opposition against the exploration.

"The public consultation process is merely a tick the box exercise. We need to be unified in our vision to make sure we do not overlap. The area being explored is about 20% of the province. This is a health, environmental and social issue. We anticipate interest from a wide spectrum of groups from farming to church-based organisations as well as the larger organisations," said Du Toit, adding that because of the size of the exploration area there was a need to have local groups at all 11 meetings beginning on November 2.

Operating under the name of the Sustainable Alternatives to Fracking

THE public outcry has led to an online petition gaining almost 1 000 votes to stop the intended gas exploration in KZN.

Environmentalist Nicky McLeod created the appeal, entitled "Don't Frack South Africa's Water Factory" on popular community petition website Aveaz.org.

By the time *The Witness* went to print yesterday, 890 signatures voted against the three-year exploration, some of which were signed by foreigners from Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Once complete, McLeod, who is campaigning against fracking in the Eastern Cape's Matatiele, plans to deliver the petition to national minister of water and sanitation Nomvula Mokonyane.

"Fracking requires about 20 million litres of water for each drill site. Few people will have access to the skilled job requirements and thousands of rural people may be adversely affected through compromised health and farming," the petition reads.

"We need renewable energy, not short-term fossil fuel extraction at the expense of our water and well-being."

and Exploration (Safe) Alliance, an e-mail forum yesterday e-mailed points the public should ask the consultants at the public meetings and offered advice on how to grow support against the fracking.

This includes a focus on health, hosting information sessions, creating a strong online presence and possibly obtaining an urgent court interdict to stop the entire process. One of the key strategies is to make it a "moral victory" while including the historical value to land, such as whether it is sacred.

The *Witness* has continued, since last week, to seek comment from both the Petroleum Agency of South Africa and the Department of Mineral Resources, however, at the time of going to print no response was forthcoming.

EXPLORATION IMPACT



Access to
unleashed
potential
may affect
wildlife
habits

EXPLORATION IMPACT



Drilling
may cause
contaminant
ground
water

EXPLORATION IMPACT



Release of gas
from boreholes
may cause
air pollution

EXPLORATION IMPACT



Seismic testing
may disrupt
ecosystem
functionality

EXPLORATION IMPACT



Farm roads,
gates, fences
may be
damaged

EXPLORATION IMPACT



Disruption of
contaminant
may pollute
surface water

EXPLORATION IMPACT



Seismic
surveys
may disrupt
livestock

EXPLORATION IMPACT



Dust from
vehicles
may cause
air pollution

EXPLORATION IMPACT



Seismic surveys
may destroy
habitats

EXPLORATION IMPACT



Seismic surveys
may disrupt
ecosystem
functionality

EXPLORATION IMPACT



Seismic
surveys
may disturb
wildlife

EXPLORATION IMPACT



Seismic
surveys
may disturb
wildlife

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Farm roads,
gates, fences
may be
damaged

EXPLORATION IMPACT



Seismic testing
may affect soils
and land
capability

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Can you identify what the implications of the experiment are outlined in the background information?

What are the implications of the experiment?

What are the implications of the experiment?

What are the implications of the experiment?

What are the implications of the experiment?

What are the implications of the experiment?

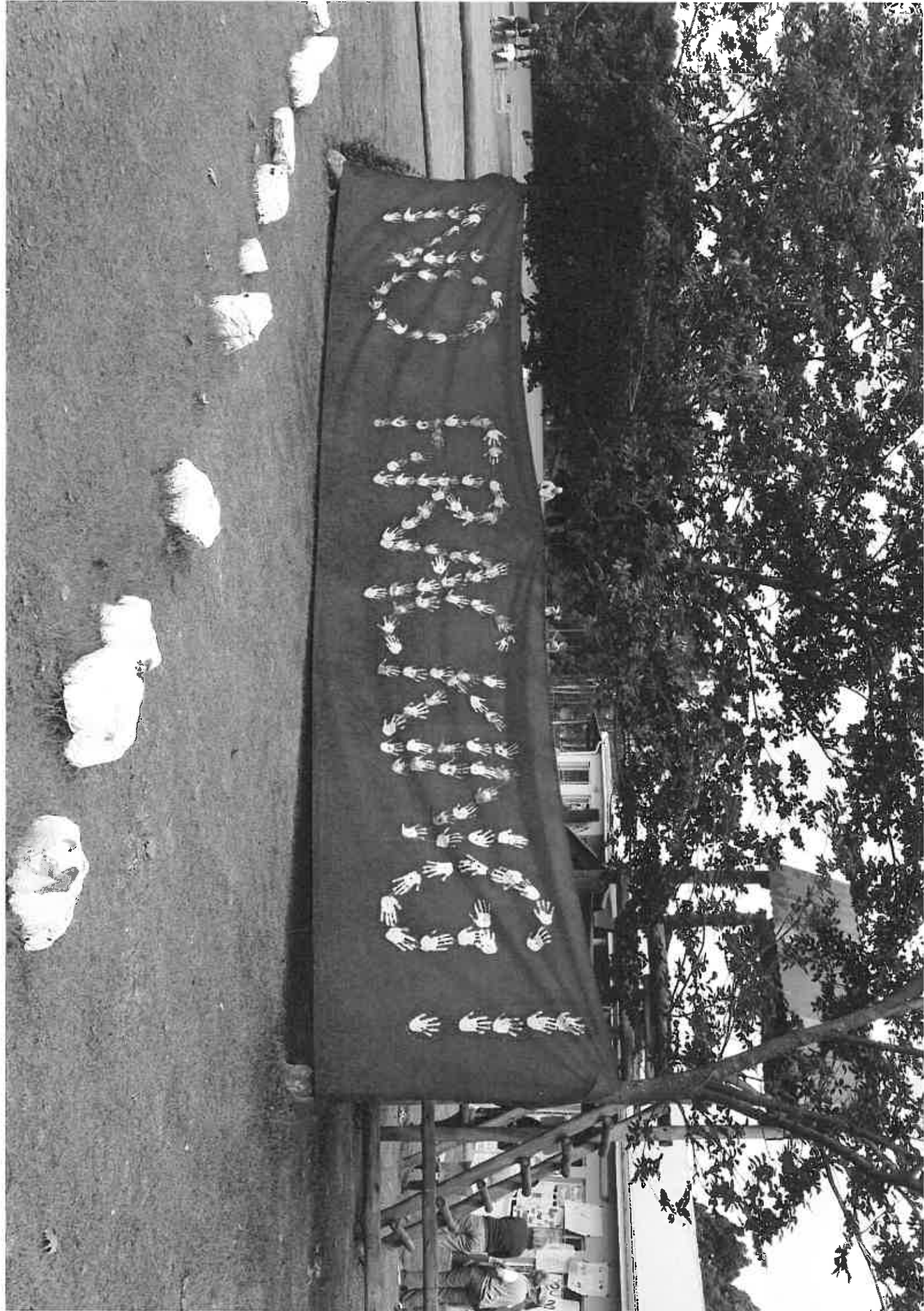
What are the implications of the experiment?

What are the implications of the experiment?

Collectively, the people of KZN are responsible withhold the social license for Rhino Oil & Gas (Pty) LTD to operate, and your client withdraws from South Africa prior to making the application for gas exportation?

Why have you chosen your client Rhino Oil & Gas (Pty) LTD to withdraw public participation in EIA with PASA?

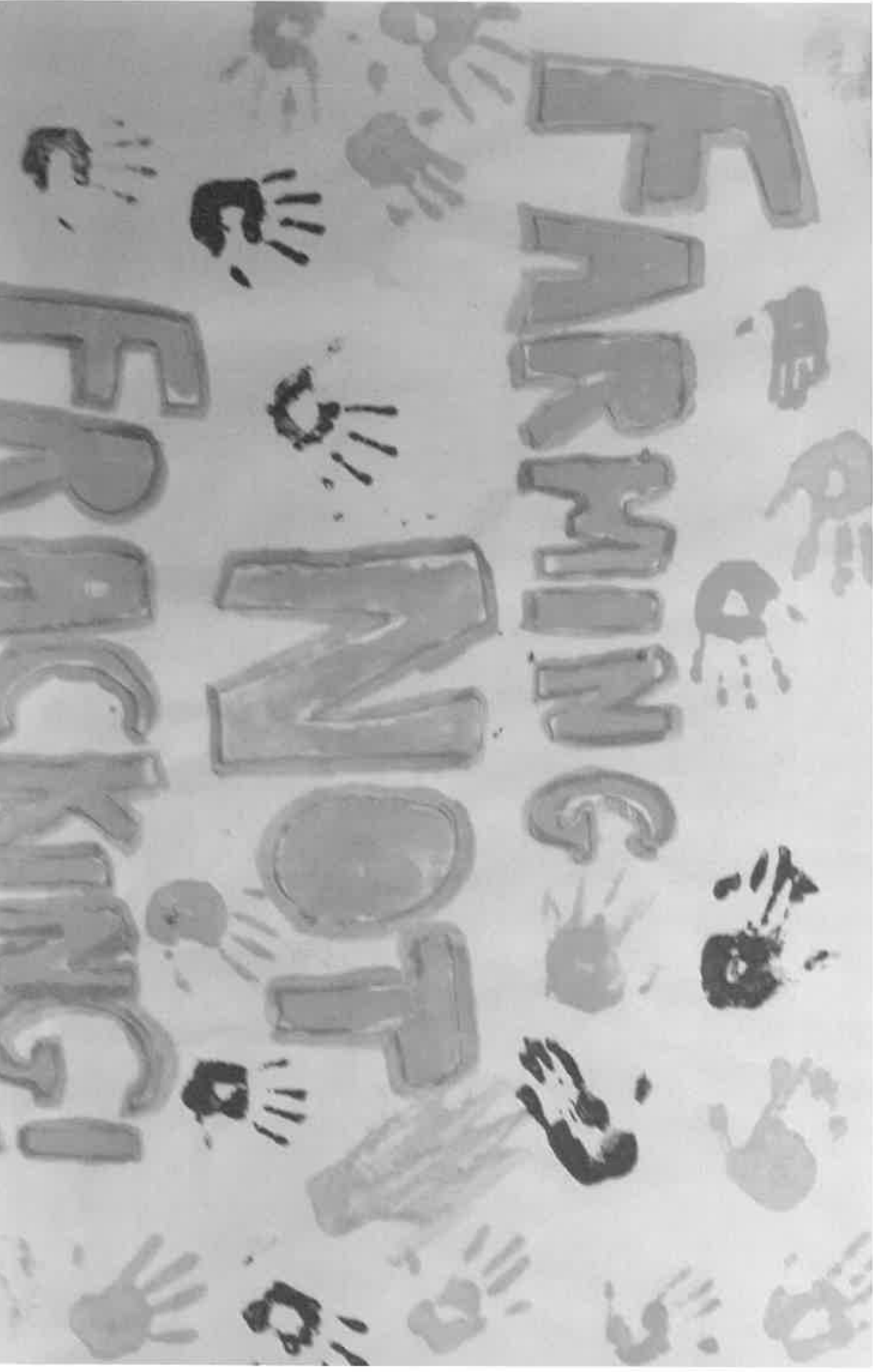
Collectively the people of KZN are responsible withhold the social license for Rhino Oil & Gas (Pty) LTD to operate, and your client withdraws from South Africa?



FRACKING!

NOT

FARMING





YITHI QHA KWI - FRACKING - EKZN



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