



WORLD OCEANS DAY 8 June 2023

"F*ck the Oil Barons!"

Who? Extinction Rebellion Cape Town

What? Sadly, just a press release this time. No action. But watch this space.

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Press Release:

Our Demands:

South Africa's beloved ocean, home to our rich marine biodiversity and the source of many jobs in fishing and coastal tourism, is threatened by the offshore oil and gas sector which is making a bid to have oil and gas exploitation be the primary purpose for 40% of the western marine planning area, 25% of the southern marine planning area and 30% of the eastern marine planning area in the government's marine spatial plan. We call on the government to forgo offshore oil and gas to safeguard coastal jobs, save us from climate disaster, fulfil our international climate change obligations and protect our rich marine biodiversity.

Supporting information:

Many South Africans feel a spiritual connection with and love for our oceans and indigenous communities revere our oceans as a place of healing and connection with their ancestors. Our marine biodiversity also inspires international admiration. [Kennedy Warne wrote in National Geographic magazine](#) that "the whole South Africa coast—from the coral reefs of the Indian Ocean to the kelp beds of the Atlantic—is one of the richest, most biologically diverse and most oceanographically complex marine environments on Earth."

Having 3,000 kms of coastline means that our oceans are a source of nutritious food—we eat approximately 312,000 tons of seafood annually and [100,000 people rely on fisheries for their livelihoods](#) and as a source of income. We also have commercial fisheries and aquaculture. Coastal tourism gives rise to many small businesses such as whale and dolphin watching, water sports, holiday accommodation and restaurants. Coastal tourism could contribute R21,4 billion to GDP and create 116,000 jobs by 2026.

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But looming over all this richness of biodiversity and the jobs that rely on it is the risk of appropriation of our oceans by the offshore oil and gas industry. The Petroleum Association of South Africa (PASA) is encouraging geoscience companies to carry out surveys of the ocean subsurface to map marine oil and gas deposits. And the oil and gas sector has asked that 40% of the western marine planning area, 25% of the southern marine planning area and 30% of the eastern marine planning area should have oil and gas exploitation as the primary purpose in the government's marine spatial plan which is currently under development.

[Currently there are twenty active exploration rights and seven production rights over the offshore petroleum blocks.](#) Exploration activity covers almost the entire coast of South Africa as can be seen from [the map on the PASA website.](#)

One of these applications affects Cape Town. Total Energies has applied for approval to drill up to five exploratory wells in a 10,000 km² area off the coast between Cape Town and Cape Agulhas, approximately 60 km from the coast at its closest point and 170 km at its furthest. The drilling will take place in deep water, ranging from 70 m to 3 kms. Approval was granted and as of now, June 2023, appeals are being considered. The Western Cape Province's Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning has appealed. Their appeal notes that although it is claimed that the risk of a well blowout is low, if a well blowout did occur, it would have a hugely significant environmental impact on the marine ecology, on marine commercial fishing, on coastal near shore users and intangible cultural heritage. The financial cost of recovering from such an event would also be very significant. The Department queries whether the insurance compensation arrangements would be adequate and reach all the parties that could be affected. The Department also notes that the Blow-out Contingency Plan and Oil Spill Contingency Plan will be developed after the environmental assessment decision and so the entities and organisations that would have to coordinate a response to such an event will not be able to make inputs to those plans.

We as Extinction Rebellion Cape Town reject offshore oil and gas exploration and exploitation for the following reasons:

- The world has a small carbon budget left which will last less than a decade before we blow through 1.5°C of warning and enter catastrophic climate breakdown.
- South Africa has made commitments in terms of the Paris Agreement to cut its carbon emissions. Developing an oil and gas industry is not compatible with fulfilling these commitments.
- Oil and gas will not come on stream for years. As the world turns increasingly away from fossil fuels, we could end up with stranded assets, investment down the drain and jobs lost.
- It is a myth that exploiting oil and gas will make South Africans wealthy. It will make oil and gas multinationals wealthy in the short-term while impoverishing us all in the long term.

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Boiler plate

Extinction Rebellion (XR) is a global network and believes it is a citizen's duty to rebel using peaceful civil disobedience when faced with criminal inactivity by its Government. The Rebellion centres on demands for Government to tell the truth about our dire situation and to act accordingly, including to decarbonise our economy by 2025, in a mobilisation of war time like proportion.

We declare a non-violent rebellion on behalf of life itself and against our criminally negligent government. Our government's abject failure to protect citizens and the next generations from unimaginable suffering brought about by climate breakdown and social collapse is no longer tolerable.

The group's key demands are:

- The Government must admit the truth about the ecological emergency, reverse all policies inconsistent with addressing climate change, and work alongside the media to communicate with citizens
- The Government must enact legally binding policy measures to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2025 and to reduce consumption levels
- A national Citizen's Assembly to oversee the changes, as part of creating a democracy fit for purpose.

Website: www.extinctionrebellion.org.za