

Sustainability initiatives benefitting the marine environment

Q73 Which of the following measures are being undertaken at the proposed site?

Initiatives to maintain or improve biodiversity, both marine and terrestrial.

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Implementation of measures to reduce plastics, discarded fishing gear and other solid waste entering waterways.

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Provision of sustainability training for local tourism businesses.

Q76 List any sustainable tourism tools or indicator systems currently adopted across the proposed site

Sodurba Tourism together with Durban Tourism (Durban Municipality) has created Tourism Routes with packages. Durban Tourism has an invested interest in promoting the area and to make sure sustainable destination management is in place.

Durban offers a great deal of events of which The African Tourism Indaba is the biggest. During Indaba, Sodurba is also actively involved in marketing the destination. The Destination is also linked to our neighbouring township - expanding into the Township Experience.

- Plastic Pollution, Beach clean-up, Entanglement

Challenge

To combat the issue of plastic pollution, one of the projects at WILDOCEANS is focused on the removal of waste from ecologically important areas such as beaches and the Durban Port . The Durban port acts as a sink for waste entering the port from canals and city storm water drainage pipes. This waste is then released into the ocean and washes up on adjacent beaches along the KZN coastline and within the WHS area.

The WILDTRUST started work at the Durban Port and along the adjacent beaches in 2017, collecting waste from the beaches and waterways coming into the port. To date, the team have collected and recycled more than 96 000 kgs of waste.

Progress

To understand the complexity of the system, and meet the biggest problems at their source, the Blue Port project is currently broadening the scope of our vision for the port. A new, multi-disciplinary project will develop a socio-ecological (SES) model that considers the complexity of the social, ecological and governance systems, and guides the activities of numerous stakeholders to transform the Durban Bay, from a degraded environment towards a restored and regenerative, productive state that is a productive asset to the blue economy.

- Shell offshore seismic surveys

Challenge

Royal Dutch Shell plc, commonly known as Shell, is a British multinational oil and gas company. In November 2021, Shell were due to begin seismic surveys along the Wild Coast, an area well-known for its high marine biodiversity. Conservationists, concerned citizens, NGOs and other groups like Youth for MPAs, supported by WILDOCEANS, were up in arms to stop Shell from following through with this operation. This activity would have been damaging to marine life and eco-tourism. Seismic

surveys produce a continuous underwater noise, greater than 230 decibels with air guns during day and night for months to map the seafloor in search of gas and oil deposits. This process could have dragged on for over five months with continuous loud shots every 10 seconds, causing prolonged effects on marine life. The long seismic pulses also cause large cetaceans to start avoiding the area and their communication may decrease or increase, signalling higher stress levels. The seismic survey was scheduled to begin during the migration season of the Humpback whales along the South African coastline. This could have had detrimental effects on the cetaceans and their new-born calves migrating back to their feeding grounds.

Progress

On the 28th of December, Grahamstown High Court in Makhanda ordered Shell to immediately halt seismic survey activities along South Africa's Wild Coast. Shell and the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy were also ordered to pay the costs of the application for the interim interdict. A different high court order gave Shell the go ahead to proceed with the seismic survey and Shell's spokesperson confirmed that the survey had begun. However, as it stands, Judge Gerald Bloem announced that Shell had the duty to meaningfully consult with the communities and individuals who would be impacted by the seismic survey and that based on the evidence provided, Shell failed to do so in the case of the applicant communities who hold customary rights, including fishing rights. This was a victory for the South African coastline, and all its biodiversity.