

Shell seismic tests approval complied with rules, Mantashe says

By [Tim Cocks](#)

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Shell's plan for seismic testing on South Africa's Wild Coast, which critics say threatens dolphins, seals, whales, penguins and other rare sea life, received all necessary environmental approvals, energy minister Gwede Mantashe said in a letter to parliament.



Minister Gwede Mantashe. Source: Reuters/Mike Hutchings

In a written reply to questions that was released by parliament late on Wednesday, Mantashe said no shortcuts had been made in the process.

"As part of the exploration right application, an environmental impact assessment was carried out in 2013 (and) no objections were received," the letter said.

"All applicable legislative requirements were followed in granting the exploration right."

On 28 December, a South African high court blocked Royal Dutch Shell from conducting seismic testing offshore of the Wild Coast, the latest ruling in a case brought by environmental groups and residents against Shell.

'Harmful to marine animals'

Environmentalists and others have protested against Shell's plans for seismic blasting, saying its underwater acoustics are harmful to marine animals, especially migrating whales.

The Wild Coast comprises some of South Africa's most unspoilt natural coastline, and is home to some of the country's most undisturbed marine wildlife refuges, all of which makes it a major tourist draw.



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Shell says its planned exploration has all the needed regulatory approval, and it will significantly contribute to energy security if resources are found - South Africa is a net importer of petroleum products.

Government officials are eager to source feedstock for the state-run Mossel Bay gas-to-liquid refinery.

Environmentalists are pressuring oil companies to stop prospecting for oil anywhere. Experts say the world has no chance of reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050 - the minimum required to halt catastrophic climate change - even if existing oil deposits are burned, let alone new ones.

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