

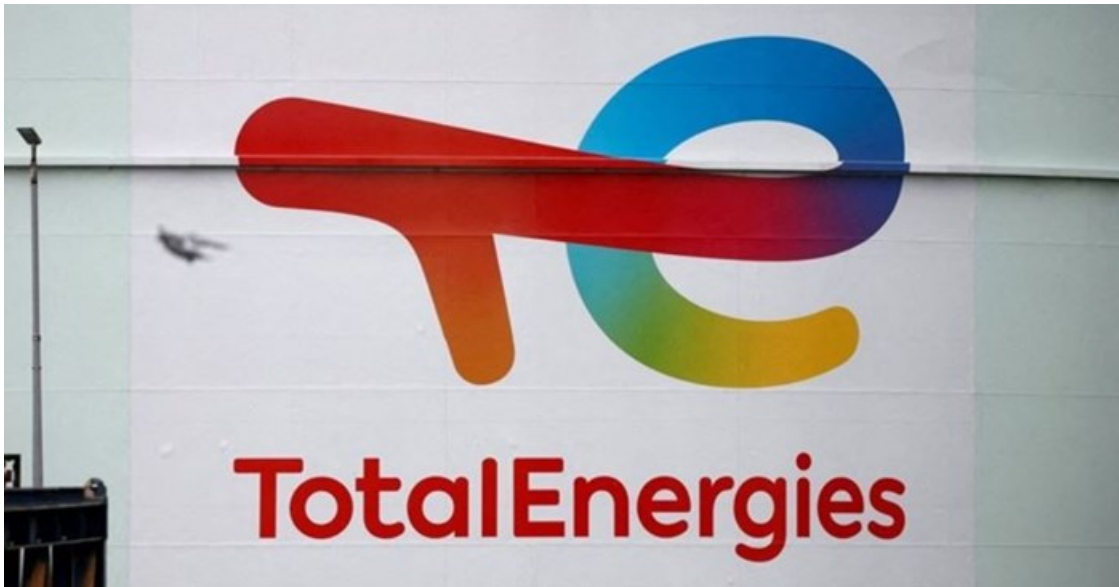
Battle over plan for offshore drilling between Cape Town and Cape Agulhas rages on



By [Katja Hamilton](#)

28 Apr 2023

French oil and gas major, TotalEnergies, has received the green light to go ahead with its oil and gas exploration off the southwest coast - a move that has been contested by activists.



Source: The logo of French oil and gas company TotalEnergies is seen on an oil tank at TotalEnergies fuel depot in Mardyck near Dunkirk, France, 16 January 2023. Reuters/Benoit Tessier

On 5 September 2022, TotalEnergies [applied](#) for a production license to exploit two major gas fields, with up to one billion barrels of oil equivalent, off the South African southern coast.

SLR Consulting [confirmed](#) the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) notified TotalEnergies of its decision on 17 April, and that interested and affected parties have 20 days (effective from 20 April) to appeal the decision with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment.

The [proposed](#) exploratory area is between Cape Town and Cape Agulhas. TotalEnergies will be able to drill up to five exploration wells in the area, each of which is expected to take three to four months. The work is set to take place from the fourth quarter of 2023 to the second quarter of 2024.

A fight for marine conservation

The undertaking entails producing seismic images by generating, recording, and analysing sound waves that travel through the earth. Known as seismic surveying, this exploratory work is known to have many types of effects on marine organisms. These can range in severity from short-term physical startle reactions to long-term behavioural changes such as abandonment of feeding habitat to mortality.

Civil society group The Green Connection [plans](#) to submit an appeal.

“We are really disappointed to find that the exploration licence has been approved. We don’t believe that we should be exploring for any more fossil fuels. The approval flies in the face of the climate crisis,” said Liziwe McDaid, the group’s strategic lead.

NGO Bloom, which works to preserve the marine environment and species, [said](#) the area earmarked for oil and gas exploration comprises strong currents and spectacular biodiversity which serves as a “blue corridor” as well as feeding or nesting grounds for thousands of whales, seals, penguins, petrels, albatrosses, endangered leatherback turtles, and fish populations such as snoek (a member of the mackerel family) and yellowtail fish.



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The DMRE [confirmed](#) TotalEnergies' proposed work and public consultation process meets prescribed procedural requirements.

Known as Block 5/6/7, the area where TotalEnergies intends to work overlaps with the Orange Basin, where there have been two major oil finds off the coast of Namibia.

Chief executive officer of TotalEnergies, Patrick Pouyanné, [said](#) in a press statement last year that the exploration projects off the southwest coast would supply gas to the SA domestic market, as part of a contribution to the country’s move away from coal and use of gas as a transition fuel.

TotalEnergies [reported](#) a profit of about \$20.5bn for 2022.

ABOUT KATJA HAMILTON

Katja is the Finance, Property and Healthcare Editor at Bizcommunity.

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