

Court ruling kills fracking?



A High Court judgment has put an end to oil and gas exploration on more than 800 000ha's in Northern KZN.

The judgment handed down in the Western Cape High Court ruled against The South African Agency for Promotion of Petroleum and Exploitation (PASA), The Minister of Mineral Resources and Rhino Oil and Gas Exploration South Africa (Pty) Ltd on an application for exploration rights.

Hailing the ruling as a "massive victory" for the local farmers who took legal action against the application for exploration, Kwanalu CEO, Sandy La Marque said: "The court decision is a huge relief for farmers not only in the northern parts of KZN but the entire province. We commend those farmers involved for their hard work and determination in achieving this result."

Rhino Oil and Gas submitted their Notice of Application for exploration in two areas – one in the KZN Midlands, the other in Northern KZN, in late 2015 and early 2016 respectively. Both applications covered a total area of more than 1 600 000ha and in excess of 15 000 farms.

The company has held various public meetings in the area where farmers and other community members have been vociferous in objecting to exploration which they saw would lead to fracking.

"When Rhino Oil and Gas first submitted their Notice of Application for exploration in KZN, Kwanalu expressed its concerns about the business and environmental impact

and the potential health implications associated with the extraction process fracking," explained Ms La Marque.

Commenting on the court ruling, Sean Hoatson, the farmer behind the legal action, said: "We are satisfied with the judgment and will abide by the court ruling."

Urging everyone to look at the bigger picture, Ms La Marque said: "Gas and mineral exploration could come at a huge cost to the environment – with the potential to contaminate our already scarce water resources, as well as being associated with serious health problems and threatening to destroy livelihoods and businesses which could lead to job losses and economic instability."

"Fracking is considered to be one of the single biggest agricultural, socio-economic and environmental threats facing South Africa so, we are very pleased to see the ruling today. This bodes well for everyone to work within the legislation that has been put in place to govern the processes and procedures associated with mineral and gas exploration in this country," she said.

Offering reassurances to farmers in the KZN Midlands about the outstanding application for exploration in their area, Ms La Marque said: "We are at the advanced stages of instituting legal intervention regarding the Midlands exploration application brought by Rhino Oil and Gas."

Rhino Oil and Gas has been contacted for comment and a response is expected soon.

Alicia Chaput was one of those who was opposed to any oil and gas exploration in the area.