

# Environmentalists address concerned citizens

Environmentalists Dr Jennifer Olbers from Ezemvelo Wildlife, Samuel Chademana from Groundwork and Alice Thomson from Earthlife Africa addressed a disappointingly small crowd on the dangers of the seismic testing and drilling operations planned for the east coast of South Africa. Notable for their absence were the majority party ward councillors, members of the angling and ski-boat clubs and representatives from the tourist-driven businesses, which will be hardest hit by the invasion of our ocean.

Marine ecologist, Dr Olbers, presented a slide-show of disturbing pictures depicting damage to sea animals, caused by seismic surveys.

The constant “bombing” of the ocean floor with high powered devices aimed at spotting potential oil and gas deposits, causes a variety of physical and behavioural problems including the disruption of breeding and feeding patterns, and the beaching of injured animals which appear to have lost their navigational abilities, because they have gone deaf. Dr Olbers warned that environmental legislation has been altered, and may continue to be altered, to fast-track projects endorsed by the President and the Dept of Mineral Resources and Energy, under the guise of providing jobs

for the South African people. Given the highly sophisticated nature of the work involved in these projects, unskilled workers will only account for an estimated 30 % of the workforce. The other 70% will have to be imported from overseas.

Mr Chademana explained that Groundwork is an anti-pollution organization, which focuses on the use and abuse of energy sources, in particular the use of fossil fuels. He warned that the continued exploitation of finite sources of energy, such as coal and oil, will have a major negative impact on the environment which we will not be able to repair.

He attributed the often violent changes in weather conditions which are being experienced all over the country, to fossil fuel-induced climate change. The exploitation of marine oil and gas deposits will destroy marine breeding grounds, which in turn, supply the traditional fishing grounds for coastal communities.

This will cause a loss of income to commercial fishermen and the destruction of the marine tourist industry. Government has no plans to protect these people from losing their livelihoods.

Ms Thomson endorsed the concerns expressed by the previous speakers.



*Samuel Chademana and Dr Jennifer Olbers.*