

# #MuteTheSea call grows louder after SDCEA meeting

**Erin Hanekom**

AS officials turn to the ocean as a form of boosting the economy, some South Durbanites are standing up and joining the #MuteTheSea drive.

The impacts of offshore oil and gas exploration were highlighted at a meeting hosted by the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) on Tuesday, 18 July.

Jennifer Olbers from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife talked about the impacts of sonar and seismic surveys on oceanic wildlife.

There is so much noise pollution in the oceans already, with commercial and other vessels. Sonar drilling and exploration add to this. It was



Adrian Pole educates the group on the legal aspects of offshore drilling.



Samuel Chademana asks people to get involved in the discussion.

previously thought the effects of exploration were limited in scope but they have far wider reaching impacts.

Not much research has been done into what impacts there have been on southern marine animals, but northern hemisphere research shows a marked impact on animals, according to data shared at the meeting. Some have shown a decrease in eating habitats, others have changed their routine, some avoid certain areas (which impacts on food chains) and others exhibit changes in their behaviour.

Marine animals rely on sound for many vital things, including finding food, communicating and attracting mates, warned Olbers. Noise levels from seismic surveys impacts heavily on these animals. In some areas they have been known to remain silent or move away.

Many people across the globe have joined the call to #MuteTheSea in a bid to protect marine animals. “All these sources generate sounds between 2 hertz and 200 hertz. This range is the same range that marine animals use in all the processes they are producing sound for.”

Local fishermen raised concerns about the impact on fishing stock and their livelihoods.

Private attorney, Adrian Pole discussed the legalities of offshore oil and gas exploration and how local communities can fight against it.

groundWork’s Samuel Chademana energised the gathering into thinking of productive and positive ways to reach people who will be affected.

The gathering discussed ways in which they can voice their opinions on the proposed drilling and why they did not want it to happen off their shore.



Desmond D'Sa speaks passionately about the protection of the ocean.