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Major oil exploration planned off South Africa's coast

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Searcher Seismic is planning a survey looking for oil offshore South Africa, months after it called off an earlier search due to a court challenge.

The company is applying for authorization to carry out the activity in multiple oil and gas blocks and ultra-deep water off the country's west coast, according to its assessment practitioner, Environmental Impact Management Services. The survey is planned to take place as close as 218 kilometres (135 miles) offshore South Africa, a background document showed.

Searcher in March said it would leave work incomplete in another area closer to the coast after South Africa's High Court ordered it to discontinue the activity.

Environmental organizations and communities have stepped up opposition to oil and gas exploration, filing lawsuits to stop seismic surveys, which they say are harmful to marine life. They have also criticized the process used to consult people who could be affected by the work.

Communities in December won a case against Shell which temporarily blocked seismic activity off another part of the South African coast.

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