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Dismal response to phosphate issue

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13 March 2017 | [Local News \(https://www.namibiansun.com/category/local-news\)](https://www.namibiansun.com/category/local-news)



Friday was the deadline for submissions by the public and other affected parties into the matter of offshore phosphate mining off the coast of Namibia, which was withdrawn last year.

Environmental commissioner Theophilus Nghitila on Friday afternoon told Namibian Sun that very few submissions were received from the public. When asked how many submissions were received, were they 10 or 20, Nghitila answered, "I would not say there are so many."

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The environmental clearance was issued by Nghitila for the “Sandpiper Project” that is located about 120km southwest of Walvis Bay. The granting of the environmental clearance to Namibia Marine Phosphate (NMP) caused a public outcry with interested and affected parties having the opportunity for input.

This led to environmental minister Pohmaba Shifeta ordering that the environmental certificate should be withdrawn, while at the same time he said the entire consultation process should be completed in six months.

Nghitila said that the submissions that were received would be reviewed and the proper processes would be followed.

According to him the submissions will also be used in the pending court case against the environmental ministry by fisheries associations.

In a submission made by the organisation Swakopmund Matters, it said that the environmental impact assessment of NMP failed to take into account microbes, food and ecosystem services in the mining areas by dredging vast areas of seabed.

“It is far-fetched to leave environmental monitoring and mitigation to NMP itself.”

It also said that the 2012 study which the ministry is relying upon has never been approved. “At the time it was deemed merely a desk study.”

Legal action has been taken against the ministry for granting the environmental certificate with three fishing organisations that are opposed to the environmental clearance certificate to NMP and to declare that the mining licence issued to the company is invalid.

Meanwhile, NMP has also filed a notice of motion at the High Court to appeal the decision by Shifeta to withdraw the environmental clearance.

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