Small-craft harbor in Durban

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Durban, South Africa

Developers and government officials in Durban, South Africa, plan to build a small-craft harbor and commercial promenade that could destroy an excellent surf spot known as Vetchie's Reef. The project promises to modernize the area and help Durban economically by providing jobs. Local residents, surfers, fisherman, and environmentalists strongly oppose the project and believe that the meager economical growth the project will provide does not justify the destruction of Vetchies Beach. The opposition has labeled the project as "a playground for the rich", being built for the sole purpose of inflating property values in the area to benefit a small elite group of investors.

Vetchies, is not only Durban's "cradle of surfing", where thousands have learnt to surf, but also a site for divers and snorklers, as well as fisherman who depend on the natural state of the reef for their livelihood. The project plans to cement over most of the beach and reef, which will completely burry the wave, the beach, and the ecosystem of the area.

Save the Waves executive director, Will Henry, states that, "governments keep failing to recognize the economic and environmental value of surfing, and instead opt for harbor and coastal projects, which damage the natural environment and tend to benefit only a handful of people". He adds, "I don't think depriving people of access to this unique stretch of beach on the East Coast of KwaZulu-Natal is going to help tourism at all. It probably will do the opposite."

Carla Graziosi, Save the Waves environmental director, explains that this issue is not only destroying a site to be considered part of Durban's heritage, but it's also threatening the environment, "It's environmentally irresponsible to make such a dramatic alteration and disruption to a marine habitat that is visited by over 300 species of birds, 23 of which are listed under C.I.T.E.S. as conservation's highest protection status."

Opposition letters are requested by Save the Waves and local groups, to be sent to the "Save Vetchies" campaign at the following address: savevetchies@gmail.com before the 30th of January 2007.