

- The geologist behind offshore Namibia oil dream
- The company that proved offshore oil potential
- Etosha and Namibia's onshore oil exploration
- The companies behind Namibia's onshore revival

Monitor tests the Nama Basin again

About a 100 years later, Monitor Exploration, with funding from Somerschield Investments, will test the Nama Basin, where Namibia's petroleum story began in 1928 with the drilling of the first well, Berseba-1.



Knowledge Katti: One name that endured

When Namibia's modern oil exploration era began in the early 2010s, few local names were as closely tied to it as Knowledge Katti's. When HRT came, Katti's company, Kunene Energy, became a local partner, holding a 10% interest in HRT Africa Ltd before Galp took up 14% participating interest.



ALFRED H KNIGHT

XRF QUALITY CONTROL SERVICES NAMIBIA

Fast, referential, and independent elemental testing is now available in Walvis Bay.

Alfred H Knight Namibia now offers state-of-the-art X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) testing in Walvis Bay. This non-destructive technique provides quick and referential elemental analysis for a wide range of sample types, enabling you to monitor and maintain quality control while your materials are in transit.

With our new local capability, you will benefit from:

- Referential analysis of base and/or minor metal concentrates and mineral ores
- Can reduce the number of export samples that require indicative analysis at international laboratories, reducing turnaround time and logistics costs
- Faster results to support timely operational decisions
- Sampling and sample preparation aligned with international standards to improve the representativity and precision of the results

Already available in South Africa and Tanzania, our expanded XRF offering enhances regional coverage, providing greater speed, flexibility, and traceability to your supply chain.

INSPECT | TEST | TRUST



WANT TO SEE IT IN ACTION?

To book a demonstration or discuss your analytical needs, contact:

Moses Pius
Country Manager, Namibia

M: +264 81 676 5747

T: +264 83 720 7104

E: moses.pius@ahkgroup.com

**Scan the QR below
to find out more!**



COVER STORY

- P.01 Monitor Exploration revives Nama Basin 97 years after first well

OIL & GAS

- P.05 Dr. Marcio Mello: The geologist who dreamed of oil beneath Namibia's Atlantic
- P.09 Knowledge Katti: From HRT's local partner to stakeholder in Namibia's oil boom
- P.13 The pioneer that proved Namibia's offshore oil potential
- P.17 Galp's long game: From HRT's early dry wells to Namibia's new oil dawn
- P.19 Namibia's onshore revival
- P.23 Etosha Petroleum: The forgotten pioneer of Namibia's onshore oil exploration
- P.25 Monitor kept onshore exploration alivedawn

Physical Address:
Sinclair office park, Sinclair
street, Eros

Website:
www.theextratormagazine.com

Subscriptions:
+264 81 848 4264

Editorial
Ndama: +264 81 765 7694

Sales and Marketing:
Ndama:
+264 81 765 7694
ndama@theextratormagazine.com
info@theextratormagazine.com

Design & Layout:
OAK Advertising studio
overcomercnc@gmail.com
+264 81 751 7470



Monitor Exploration revives Nama Basin 97 years after first well

Monitor Exploration has revived oil exploration in the Nama Basin, 97 years after Namibia's first oil well was drilled there in 1928.

The company's new Petroleum Exploration

Licence marks the return of modern hydrocarbon exploration to the country's oldest petroleum frontier—an area that first attracted explorers nearly a century ago.

The Nama Basin, which

Monitor Exploration has revived oil exploration in the Nama Basin, 97 years after Namibia's first oil well was drilled.



spans southern Namibia into parts of South Africa, is geologically significant as the cradle of Namibia's petroleum search.

In 1928, the South West Africa Petroleum Corporation drilled Berseba-1, the country's first recorded oil well. It encountered a shallow gas blow-out at roughly 1,000 metres but failed to find commercial hydrocarbons. Despite the technical limitations of the time, the well

demonstrated the presence of a working petroleum system, sparking early interest in the region's potential.

Over the following decades, several companies returned to test the basin.

In 1963, the Artnell Exploration Company drilled the Vreda-1 well to a depth of approximately 1,840 metres, but no commercial discovery was made.

In 1968, De Beers Oil

In 1928, Berseba-1 became Namibia's first oil well — and its first glimpse of hydrocarbon potential.



Holdings, in partnership with Shell/BP and Aquitaine SWA, acquired a concession covering parts of the southern basin and drilled the Tses-1 well to a depth of around 2,225 metres.

The well, like its predecessors, failed to yield hydrocarbons in commercial quantities, and the licence was later relinquished.

In 1992, the state-owned National Petroleum Corporation of Namibia (NAMCOR) undertook renewed geological work, including a 27,000 line-kilometre aeromagnetic survey and the drilling of two stratigraphic test wells, ND-1 and ND-2, to understand basin structure and



sedimentary history.

Although these wells did not lead to commercial production, they generated vital subsurface data that still underpins exploration studies in the region today.

Between 2003 and 2009, the Hungarian firm INA Industrija Nafta conducted a reconnaissance programme across the Nama Basin.

The company acquired airborne gravity and magnetic data, followed by roughly 500 line-kilometres of 2D seismic surveys.

No wells were drilled during this phase, as INA's programme focused on assessing petroleum potential

rather than committing to high-cost exploration drilling.

These campaigns collectively established the Nama Basin as a frontier petroleum province with evidence of hydrocarbon generation, though not yet a commercial discovery.

Geological and geochemical studies have confirmed that the basin contains organic-rich shales and potential reservoirs within the late Precambrian to Cambrian Nama Group, including the Fish River and Gariep formations. Migration pathways and trap integrity, however, remain the key uncertainties that limited earlier exploration success.

Now, nearly a century

after Berseba-1, Monitor Exploration Limited (MEL UK)—a privately held company based in the United Kingdom—has returned to the basin with a modern exploration strategy.

The new licence, held through its Namibian subsidiary MEL Oil & Gas Exploration Namibia (Pty) Ltd, covers a large portion of the central Nama Basin.

MEL plans to integrate historical datasets with new geophysical surveys, basin modelling, and stratigraphic analysis to define prospective zones for future drilling.

Funding for the programme comes partly from Somerschild Investments, a Windhoek-based

investment firm that recently became a shareholder in MEL Namibia.

The financing will support early-stage geological and geophysical work, including data reprocessing and field verification.

The company will also engage with local authorities and communities in the Karas Region as part of its environmental and access permitting process.

Monitor's re-entry into the Nama Basin coincides with renewed interest in Namibia's onshore petroleum systems, as exploration success offshore in the Orange Basin has highlighted

the country's wider hydrocarbon potential.

The basin's structural and sedimentary characteristics, including its thickness and maturity of source rocks, make it a prime candidate for modern re-evaluation using advanced seismic and modelling technologies.

The company's initial focus will be to update vintage seismic lines and reassess the locations of historical wells to define potential traps and reservoir targets better.

Once this work is completed, Monitor plans to rank drilling leads and advance toward a first exploration well later in the decade.

By returning to the Nama Basin, Monitor

Geological and geochemical studies confirm the basin contains organic-rich shales and potential reservoirs.



Exploration has revived activity in the birthplace of Namibia's oil exploration.

Nearly a hundred years after Berseba-1 briefly ignited the flame of possibility, modern technology, local investment, and new data could finally reveal the resources that early explorers only glimpsed.



Dr. Marcio Mello: The geologist who dreamed of oil beneath Namibia's Atlantic

In 2013, HRT Participações em Petróleo S.A. announced that it had found light oil from Namibia's Wingat-1 well.

There was one man – Dr Marcio Rocha Mello, a Brazilian petroleum

geologist and visionary entrepreneur, who had taken Namibia's oil story from speculation to scientific proof.

Born and educated in Brazil, Dr Mello rose through the ranks at Petrobras, Brazil's state



oil company, where he became one of its leading experts in petroleum systems and basin modelling.

His career coincided with Brazil's growing understanding of its pre-salt reserves — vast oil fields locked beneath layers of salt offshore in the Santos and Campos Basins.

At Petrobras, Mello pioneered advanced techniques in organic geochemistry and source rock analysis, building his reputation as an expert in how oil is generated and trapped beneath the earth's crust. But after more than two decades at Petrobras, he wanted to apply that knowledge on a global scale.

Founding HRT — a vision beyond Brazil

In 2009, Mello founded HRT Participações em Petróleo S.A. with a bold vision: to explore for oil

Nearly a decade later, Shell, TotalEnergies and Galp are following the seismic grids he built.

in “conjugate margin” basins — regions on opposite sides of the Atlantic that were once geologically connected before the continents drifted apart.

He believed that the South Atlantic's geological symmetry meant that oil systems in Brazil's Santos Basin should have mirror-image equivalents on Africa's west coast, in countries such as Namibia and Angola. If Brazil's offshore pre-salt had yielded billions of barrels, Mello reasoned, then Namibia's offshore basins could do

the same.

With investor enthusiasm high after Brazil's oil boom, HRT quickly raised hundreds of millions of dollars through listings on the São Paulo and Toronto stock exchanges.

Within two years, it became one of Latin America's most talked-about exploration companies.

The Namibia gamble

Mello's most audacious move came in 2010, when HRT entered Namibia through its subsidiary HRT Africa Ltd. The company acquired ten offshore Petroleum Exploration Licences (PELs 23–32) across the Walvis and Orange Basins, covering more than 80,000 square kilometres — making it one of the largest offshore acreage holders in the world at the time.

Under Namibia's

local partnership rules, HRT partnered with Kunene Energy (Pty) Ltd, owned by Namibian businessman Knowledge Katti, and the National Petroleum Corporation of Namibia (NAMCOR), each holding 10% carried interests.

To Mello, Namibia represented not only a geological twin of Brazil, but also a political and economic opportunity — a frontier state eager to prove its oil potential. His message to investors was electrifying and straightforward: “What we found in Brazil, we can find again across the Atlantic.”

The three wells that defined a legacy

By 2013, HRT launched a US\$200 million drilling campaign in partnership with Portugal’s Galp

Energia, which farmed into three licences.

The company drilled three wells — Wingat-1, Murombe-1, and Moosehead-1 — marking Namibia’s first serious deepwater exploration effort.

Wingat-1, spudded in March 2013, made history when it recovered light, 38°–42° API oil to the surface — the first ever in Namibia’s offshore history.

Although the accumulation was too small for production, it proved that Namibia’s offshore basins contained an active petroleum system.

For Mello, it was a scientific triumph but a commercial heartbreak. The following wells, Murombe-1 and Moosehead-1, encountered good

When the first drops of oil surfaced from Wingat-1 in 2013, it was the vindication of one man’s dream.

〰

geological structures but no oil traps.

Investors, expecting a billion-barrel discovery, were unforgiving. HRT’s share price collapsed by more than 90%, and critics called the campaign a failure.

The collapse of HRT

By late 2013, the company that had once been worth billions was in crisis. HRT’s debts mounted, its assets underperformed, and the Namibian campaign

— though geologically promising — failed to deliver the commercial success needed to sustain investor confidence.

In 2014, under immense financial pressure, HRT merged with PetroRio, another Brazilian oil firm, effectively ending Mello's control over the company he had founded. The merger marked the end of HRT's Namibian chapter and of Mello's dream to turn geological symmetry into an oil empire.

A lasting scientific legacy

Despite its commercial collapse, Mello's work left a profound legacy. His team collected one of the most comprehensive geological datasets ever assembled for Namibia's offshore basins —

including well logs, core samples, and 3D seismic data — which today underpin the exploration successes of Shell, TotalEnergies, and Galp.

The Barremian–Aptian Kudu shale, first identified and analysed by HRT's geologists, is now recognised as the principal source rock feeding Namibia's modern oil discoveries. In scientific terms, Mello was right — Namibia's geology was indeed a mirror of Brazil's. He just arrived before the technology, capital, and timing were ready.

A pioneer remembered

Today, as Namibia stands on the cusp of joining the ranks of oil-producing nations, Dr Marcio Mello's name surfaces again — not in headlines, but in the

technical footnotes of every discovery.

The seismic grids and source rock models that his team built in 2013 continue to guide the next generation of explorers.

He may have left Namibia without a barrel of oil, but Mello proved something priceless: that beneath the sands and salt layers of the Atlantic margin, Namibia's oil was real.

A visionary geologist ahead of his time, Dr Mello's story is one of ambition, risk, and scientific conviction — the story of a man who looked at the Atlantic Ocean and saw not separation, but a mirror.

Knowledge Katti: From HRT's local partner to stakeholder in Namibia's oil boom

When Namibia's modern oil exploration era began in the early 2010s, few local names were as closely tied to it as Knowledge Katti. Then, an emerging businessman with a growing interest in natural resources, Katti became one of the first Namibian entrepreneurs to enter the offshore oil industry — not as a miner or engineer, but as a local partner in a venture that would shape the country's petroleum story for the next decade.

Katti's entry into oil came through Kunene Energy (Pty) Ltd, his Namibian investment vehicle. In 2010, when HRT Participações em Petróleo S.A., a Brazilian independent oil company, arrived in Namibia, the government required



Katti became one of the first Namibian entrepreneurs to enter the offshore oil industry — not as a miner or engineer, but as a local partner in a venture that would shape the country's petroleum story for the next decade.

all foreign petroleum operators to include a Namibian empowerment partner. HRT, led by former Petrobras geologist Dr Marcio Mello, was acquiring an enormous spread of offshore acreage — ten

Petroleum Exploration Licences (PELs 23–32) in the Walvis and Orange Basins, covering over 80,000 square kilometres.

Under the local content and empowerment rules, Kunene Energy became

HRT's Namibian partner, holding a 10% interest in HRT Africa Ltd, alongside the National Petroleum Corporation of Namibia (Namcor), which had another 10% carried stake. HRT retained the remaining 80% and complete operational control.

At the time, this partnership structure was unprecedented. Namibia had never hosted such a large-scale offshore exploration programme, and Katti's participation symbolised the start of a new era — one in which Namibians would directly hold stakes in frontier oil exploration.

In 2012, Portugal's Galp Energia farmed into three of HRT's licences — PEL 23, PEL 24, and PEL 28 — acquiring a 14% share. The partnership set the stage for what

Kunene Energy's partnership with HRT marked the beginning of direct Namibian participation in frontier oil exploration.



became Namibia's first major deepwater drilling campaign.

The wells that changed the narrative

In 2013, HRT drilled three wells: Wingat-1, Murombe-1, and Moosehead-1. The first, Wingat-1, made history as the first well to recover live oil to the surface in Namibia. Although non-commercial, it confirmed the existence of an active petroleum system — a geological milestone that

redefined the country's oil potential.

Murombe-1 and Moosehead-1 followed, both encountering good reservoir sands but no trapped hydrocarbons.

By the end of the year, HRT had spent over US\$200 million, found no commercial oil, and its stock price had collapsed. Within a year, the company restructured and merged with PetroRio, effectively ending its Namibian operations.

For Katti, that meant his first foray into oil ended with unfulfilled promise. But it also left him with something few others had: experience, data, and networks in a high-risk, high-reward frontier industry.

After HRT — laying the groundwork

When HRT exited, its offshore Petroleum Exploration Licences were gradually relinquished or re-awarded. But the data — the seismic studies, well logs, and reservoir samples — became part of Namibia's national petroleum archive.

These very datasets later guided new entrants such as Shell, TotalEnergies, and Galp toward the same basins that HRT had once explored.

Katti, meanwhile, restructured his own interests. He began to invest in new ventures aligned with Namibia's next phase of exploration.

By the late 2010s, he had founded Custos Energy, a Namibian company designed to participate directly in petroleum licences as a local equity partner and facilitator of international

Wingat-1 made history as the first well to recover live oil to the surface in Namibia — a geological milestone that redefined the country's oil potential.

investment.

Custos and the Orange Basin boom

As Namibia's offshore story reignited with the discovery of oil by Shell (Graff and Jonker) and TotalEnergies (Venus) in 2022, Custos Energy began to feature prominently in the new joint ventures taking shape in the Orange Basin.

Custos holds stakes in several strategic Petroleum Exploration Licences, including PEL

83, where Portugal's Galp Energia is operator, alongside Namcor.

It was in this very licence that the Mopane oil discoveries were announced between 2023 and 2024, confirming the Orange Basin as one of the world's most prospective new oil provinces.

Custos also holds a 15% interest in PEL 87, where exploration is ongoing in partnership with Pancontinental Energy (operator) and Namcor. These stakes give Custos direct participation in some of Namibia's most valuable petroleum acreage.

Sintana Energy and global reach

Katti's energy interests also expanded internationally through his role in Sintana Energy Inc., a Canadian-listed

oil and gas exploration company with a growing Namibian portfolio.

He serves as an independent director on Sintana's board and holds an estimated 22.5 million shares — roughly 6% of the company — a stake now valued at more than US\$11 million.

Sintana Energy is a partner in Custos' Namibian ventures, including PEL 83 and PEL 87. Together, the companies represent a bridge between foreign capital and local participation, echoing the structure first pioneered during HRT's tenure but now under a new generation of partnerships.

A decade later — from risk to reward

More than ten years after HRT's first well, Knowledge Katti's name

Katti's first foray into oil ended with unfulfilled promise — but also with experience, data, and networks that few others possessed.



remains intertwined with Namibia's oil journey — from its uncertain beginnings to its current promise of commercial production.

His business evolution mirrors the country's own trajectory: from early risk-taking to strategic, locally anchored participation in one of Africa's fastest-growing energy frontiers.

While HRT exited Namibia without success, it left behind the blueprint for how local participation would work.

Katti, through Kunene Energy and later Custos, helped define that model — one that ensures Namibians hold an equity stake in their country's natural resources.

Today, with Custos Energy embedded in discoveries like Mopane and partnerships stretching from Windhoek to Toronto, Katti's early bet on oil has matured into a diversified presence across Namibia's most promising petroleum basins.

From HRT's historic but costly wells to the billion-barrel horizons of the Orange Basin, his story is that of a businessman who entered Namibia's oil industry at its inception — and stayed long enough to see its potential finally realised.



HRT: The pioneer that proved Namibia's offshore oil potential

Long before Namibia's Orange Basin became the focus of global oil exploration, one company had already taken the risk—drilling deep into the Atlantic and proving that oil did indeed exist beneath Namibian waters.

That company was HRT Participações em Petróleo S.A., a Brazilian independent founded by geologist Dr Marcio Mello, a former Petrobras exploration executive.

When HRT entered Namibia in 2010, it did so

Long before Namibia's Orange Basin became the focus of global oil exploration, one company had already taken the risk—drilling deep into the Atlantic and proving that oil did indeed exist beneath Namibian waters.



through its wholly owned subsidiary HRT Africa Ltd, acquiring an extensive portfolio of ten offshore Petroleum Exploration Licences (PELs 23–32) across the Walvis and Orange Basins, covering more than 80,000 square kilometres. HRT

was the operator and majority owner with an 80% working interest, while Namibia's National Petroleum Corporation (NAMCOR) held a 10% carried interest.

To comply with Namibia's local partnership requirement,

HRT included Kunene Energy (Pty) Ltd, a Namibian company owned by businessman Knowledge Katti, which held the remaining 10% stake.

The arrangement reflected Namibia's early efforts to ensure that local investors directly participated in petroleum ventures—a model that later became standard across the country's oil licensing framework.

In 2012, Portugal's Galp Energia farmed into three of HRT's licences—PEL 23, PEL 24, and PEL 28—acquiring a 14% interest to help fund and technically support HRT's upcoming deepwater drilling campaign. At the time, the move was seen as one of the boldest exploration bets ever made on Namibia's

offshore frontier.

In 2013, HRT launched its three-well drilling campaign using the Transocean Marianas rig. The first well, Wingat-1, spudded in the Walvis Basin's PEL 23, made history as the first well in Namibia to recover live oil to the surface.

The oil, light and sweet at 38°–42° API, was found in thin sands within Albian-age carbonate layers. Although the reservoir quality was poor and volumes too small to commercialise, it proved a crucial point—Namibia's offshore basins contained a working petroleum system.

The second well, Murombe-1, drilled nearby, targeted deeper turbidite systems. It encountered good sandstone development

When HRT entered Namibia in 2010, it acquired ten offshore licences covering more than 80,000 square kilometres—an unprecedented bet on the country's frontier basins.



with porosity averaging 19%, but the sands were water-wet, with no hydrocarbon accumulations.

The final well, Moosehead-1, drilled in the Orange Basin, tested a large structural trap thought to resemble Brazil's pre-salt systems. Instead, it penetrated tight volcanic rocks and found no oil.

By the end of 2013, HRT had spent more than

US\$200 million on drilling three non-commercial wells. From a financial standpoint, the campaign was devastating. HRT's stock price collapsed, and the company faced mounting debt. But scientifically, the results were transformative.

The wells proved the presence of oil-generating source rocks—notably the Barremian–Aptian Kudu shale—and provided Namibia's first direct evidence of an active petroleum system offshore.

After the drilling campaign, HRT's financial troubles deepened. The company had banked its future on a Namibian oil discovery that never materialised. In 2014, amid declining oil prices and investor pressure, HRT underwent a major corporate restructuring

Although HRT's campaign cost over US\$200 million and yielded no commercial discoveries, it revolutionised Namibia's geological understanding.



and merged with PetroRio, another Brazilian oil company.

Under the merger, Namibia was deemed non-core, and HRT shifted its focus back to Brazil, where it operated small onshore production assets.

HRT's Namibian operations were placed under HRT Africa Ltd, which subsequently ceased exploration activity. As a result,

most of its offshore PELs 23–32 were relinquished or allowed to expire upon completion of their initial work programmes.

However, the data generated from HRT's wells and seismic surveys did not vanish. It was transferred to Namibia's Ministry of Mines and Energy and the National Petroleum Data Repository, becoming public domain information accessible to later explorers.

Over time, many of HRT's former licence areas were re-awarded to new companies. PEL 23 in the Walvis Basin, where Wingat-1 and Murombe-1 were drilled, was later taken over by Eco Atlantic, Tullow, and Azule Energy (Eni/BP). PELs 24 and 28 in the Orange Basin, previously held jointly

with Galp, were later consolidated and redesignated as PEL 83. Galp retained involvement and eventually became operator, leading to the Mopane oil discoveries in 2023 and 2024 alongside NAMCOR and Custos Energy.

The remaining licences were either relinquished or reallocated to new explorers such as Global Petroleum, Tullow Oil, and Pancontinental Energy, contributing to the ongoing exploration boom.

By the time HRT formally exited Namibia, it had produced no oil, but it had transformed Namibia's geological understanding. Its drilling results confirmed that the Walvis and Orange Basins were not barren, as once thought, but alive with petroleum

HRT came too early and ran out of money before technology and confidence caught up—but its bold venture changed the narrative of Namibian oil forever.



systems. The company's data—from well logs and cuttings to seismic grids and geochemical samples—became the foundation for modern exploration across Namibia's continental shelf.

The same stratigraphic intervals first tested by HRT are now the source of Namibia's most significant oil discoveries—Shell's Graff and Jonker, TotalEnergies' Venus, and Galp's

Mopane. Every one of these later discoveries can trace its technical lineage back to HRT's 2013 wells, which established the geological proof of concept.

In retrospect, HRT came too early and ran out of money before technology and industry confidence caught up. Yet its bold venture changed the narrative of Namibian oil forever. From the thin traces of oil at Wingat-1 to the billion-barrel finds of a new era, HRT's short but daring chapter remains the starting point of Namibia's modern petroleum story. This campaign failed commercially but proved that Namibia's deepwater basins held oil all along.

Galp's long game: From HRT's early dry wells to Namibia's new oil dawn

Galp Energia first arrived in Namibia in 2012 when the Atlantic frontier was a graveyard of unfulfilled dreams. Oil companies had drilled for decades without a commercial discovery.

Yet Galp took the gamble, farming into three

offshore exploration licences operated by Brazil's HRT Participações em Petróleo — PEL 23 in the Walvis Basin and PELs 24 and 28 in the Orange Basin.

Back then, optimism ran high.

HRT was a darling of Brazil's pre-salt boom and had convinced investors that Namibia's deepwater geology mirrored Brazil's Santos Basin

across the Atlantic. Galp bought a 14 per cent stake and agreed to carry part of HRT's 2013 drilling costs, hoping the Namibian Atlantic margin would yield another Lula-sized discovery.

In March 2013, HRT spudded the Wingat-1 well in PEL 23, with Galp as partner.

The well encountered light oil — 38 to 42° API — but



in thin, non-commercial sands. Still, it proved something no one had confirmed before: Namibia's offshore source rocks were indeed generating oil.

Next came Murombe-1, drilled deeper into the Walvis Basin in search of thicker turbidite reservoirs. The sands were there, but they were water-wet. Finally, Moosehead-1 in the Orange Basin, which many believed would be the big one, found only tight volcanic rocks and traces of the Aptian–Barremian Kudu shale, rich in organic matter but poorly developed as a reservoir. Three wells, three misses.

For HRT, the financial toll was devastating. The company's share price collapsed, its Namibian dream evaporated, and it eventually withdrew from the country. But for Galp, the experience was different.

Those wells had given it the most critical insight in Namibian petroleum geology: there was a working oil system — active, marine, and prolific. It just needed better imaging, better reservoir targeting, and

better luck.

Galp stayed on quietly while others left. Over the next several years, it acquired and reprocessed seismic data, studied HRT's logs, and observed TotalEnergies and Shell beginning to test deeper structures farther south. By 2019, Galp had repositioned itself into PEL 83, in the heart of the Orange Basin — a zone that later proved to hold Namibia's most significant discoveries. It was a patient bet, rooted in what HRT's early wells had revealed and what new data now confirmed: the source rocks extended farther south, charging a vast series of traps along the basin margin.

In late 2023, more than a decade after its first Namibian venture, Galp spudded Mopane-1X in PEL 83. This time, everything clicked—the well intersected multiple stacked light-oil and gas-condensate reservoirs with excellent porosity and pressure.

Follow-up wells — Mopane-2X and Mopane-3X — confirmed continuity and volume, suggesting a system that could hold around

10 billion barrels of oil equivalent in place.

Suddenly, the company that had entered Namibia when no one believed in its petroleum promise was now leading one of the country's biggest offshore plays.

Galp's Namibian journey is a story of endurance. Where its original partner HRT burned out, Galp adapted — learning from early dry holes, investing in better technology, and moving to a more prospective geological fairway.

The same basins once dismissed as barren are now alive with drilling rigs and seismic vessels, and Galp stands at the centre of that revival.

From Wingat-1's faint traces of oil in 2013 to Mopane's stacked reservoirs in 2024, Galp's path shows how long-term persistence, informed by science and timing, can turn early disappointment into a defining oil story.

The data from yesterday's failures can light the way to tomorrow's discoveries.

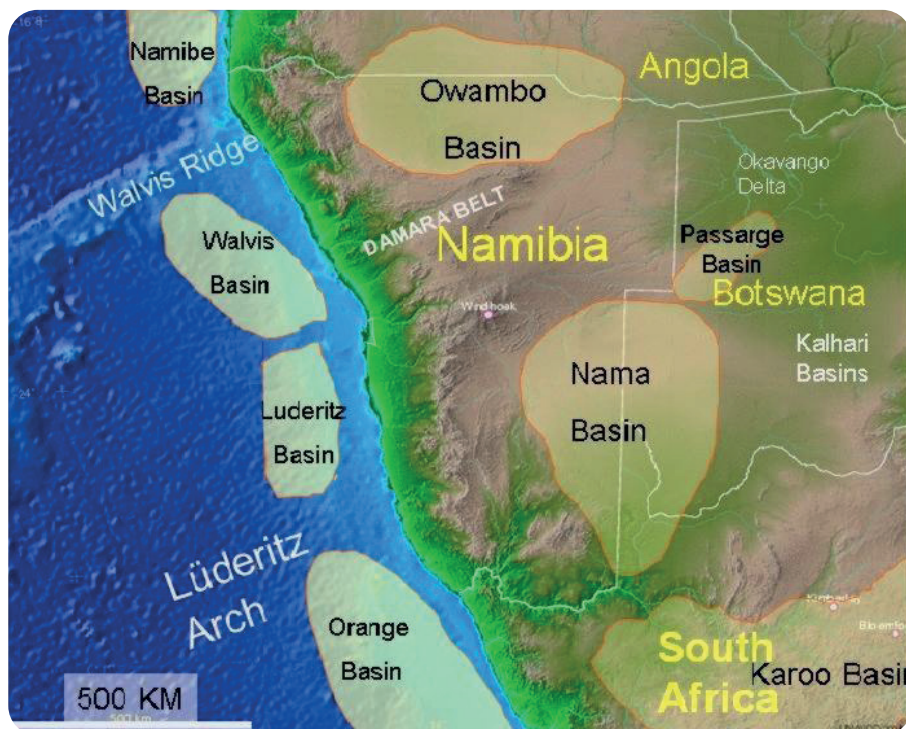
Namibia's onshore revival

Namibia's onshore oil and gas story did not begin with the recent surge of interest in the Kavango.

A decade before the current wave, the Owambo–Etosha interior was already being mapped from the air and on the ground.

Government records show a progression of regional datasets: aeromagnetic and gravity programmes in 2012, 2013 and 2015, followed by a 2D seismic traverse acquired in 2017.

Those layers—basic but invaluable—established basin architecture, highlighted structural highs and potential stratigraphic traps, and set the stage for the



licences that are now edging toward more advanced work.

Against that backdrop, two lesser-known onshore players have held their ground: Elephant Oil on PEL 101 and Babecca Business Links on PEL 92.

Neither carries the profile of Namibia's offshore giants, but both sit squarely within the country's interior petroleum picture and help explain how the onshore portfolio has developed.

Elephant Oil's entry

was formalised in August 2021, when the Government of Namibia signed a Petroleum Agreement for onshore Block 1919, also known as PEL 101. The working interest split is straightforward: Elephant Oil at 70 per cent, Niikela Exploration at 20 per cent, and a 10 per cent carried interest for Namcor E&P. The block covers roughly 11,675 square kilometres with road access and proximity to earlier survey grids.

The agreement carries minimum exploration expenditure obligations in the low millions of US dollars and sets out the standard work commitments that move a licence from desktop to

A decade before the current wave, the Owambo–Etosha interior was already being mapped from the air and on the ground.



field stage.

Since then, Elephant Oil's public disclosures have emphasised early-stage technical maturation rather than immediate drilling.

The work has focused on compiling legacy data, refining basin models and planning next steps within the licence term. No well has been spudded in Namibia to date under PEL 101.

Still, the groundwork is consistent with the methodical approach often taken in frontier onshore basins: reconcile historical gravity and magnetics with modern interpretation, consider where to add targeted 2D seismic, and build the environmental and community frameworks that underpin any future drilling decision.

Babecca Business Links' PEL 92 presents a different challenge for the outside observer: it is visible on successive Ministry and Namcor licence maps as an onshore block, yet there is limited technical detail in the public domain.

Shareholding information is not elaborated on official

channels, and recent field activity has not been summarised in the way some other PELs have been. That does not mean work is not happening; it simply means the company has communicated less in open sources. For a sector tracking Namibia's interior prospects, PEL 92 remains one to watch, and an official status note from the authorities or the licensee would provide clear guidance on milestones and timelines.

What ties these stories together is the quiet accumulation of pre-drill evidence across the interior. The older aeromagnetic and gravity

Elephant Oil and Babecca Business Links may not headline Namibia's oil narrative, but both are integral to its interior petroleum picture.

■ — ■  ■ — ■

grids helped pick out basement trends and possible sedimentary depocentres; the 2017 2D seismic traverse offered a sparse but telling look at subsurface geometries.

Companies like Elephant Oil and Babecca are, in effect, custodians of the

next phase: deciding where new seismic lines would be most revealing, justifying environmental impact assessments, and sequencing community engagement before any rig arrives.

Onshore exploration costs are a fraction of deepwater campaigns, but frontier basins demand patience and careful capital. A modest seismic programme, a rigorous environmental process and a single well can still absorb significant funds for a junior. That is why working-interest structures, carried state participation, and staged obligations are common across Namibia's onshore

portfolio.

They balance risk, maintain momentum and give the state a line of sight into the maturation of its interior resources.

For readers of a special edition on Namibia's onshore landscape, the immediate takeaways are practical. First, the interior basins have a documented exploration lineage that predates the current headlines, and that legacy continues to inform today's work.

Second, beyond the better-known operators, licences like PEL 101 and PEL 92 expand the map of who is active and where.

Under PEL 101, Elephant Oil is advancing methodically—building basin models, compiling data, and preparing for the field rather than rushing to drill.



Third, status varies by block: Elephant Oil has a defined ownership structure and an early-stage programme that has yet to move to the drill phase; Babecca's PEL 92 is confirmed on official maps but awaits fuller public detail on recent activity.

The following year or two will likely revolve around three questions: which blocks commission fresh seismic to tighten structural models; which licensees complete environmental and community processes to keep drilling options open; and which partnerships consolidate to carry work programmes forward.

However those answers unfold, Namibia's onshore story will be shaped as much by steady, well-communicated progress on these interior licences as by the headline-making wells elsewhere.

Etosha Petroleum: The forgotten pioneer of Namibia's onshore oil exploration

A Houston-based energy conglomerate best known for its natural gas pipeline empire in the United States, established a local subsidiary — Etosha Petroleum Company (Pty) Ltd — to explore for oil in the remote Owambo Basin of northern Namibia, then South West Africa in 1959.

Etosha Petroleum's directors were US nationals appointed by the parent company, while local legal and administrative duties were handled through representatives in Windhoek to satisfy colonial corporate registration requirements.

There were no Namibian shareholders or government participation



at the time — an arrangement typical of pre-independence exploration ventures.

Once incorporated, Etosha Petroleum launched one of the most ambitious geological programmes the territory had ever seen.

Between 1960 and 1962, the company conducted aeromagnetic and gravity surveys

covering over 140,000 square kilometres, stretching from the Etosha Pan across the Owambo plains to the Angolan border. These studies confirmed the presence of deep sedimentary formations, some more than five kilometres thick — a strong indication of potential hydrocarbon-bearing strata.

Encouraged by the findings, the company drilled Namibia's first recorded onshore petroleum well, the Strat-Test-1, in 1964.

The borehole reached a depth of roughly 1,800 metres and penetrated sequences of sandstone, shale, and limestone.

Though traces of oil-stained sandstones and minor gas shows were encountered, no commercial hydrocarbons were discovered.

The results, while disappointing, were scientifically significant. For the first time, detailed subsurface data revealed the structure and stratigraphy of the Owambo Basin.

The exploration confirmed the existence of all key geological components required for petroleum systems — source rocks, reservoirs, and potential traps — even if the right combination for production was not found at that time.

Following the dry well,

**Texas Eastern
Transmission
Corporation's
Namibian venture
began not offshore,
but deep in the
Owambo Basin.**



Texas Eastern decided to withdraw from Namibia. By 1965–1966, Etosha Petroleum was quietly dissolved, and its exploration licence was surrendered to the South West Africa Administration.

The company's operations were absorbed back into Texas Eastern's US portfolio as it refocused on natural gas transmission.

In later years, Texas Eastern would itself become part of a succession of corporate mergers, ultimately forming part of Duke Energy Corporation.

Though Etosha Petroleum vanished from Namibia's corporate register, its legacy

endures.

The data, maps, and core samples from its 1960s campaign remain archived within Namcor's geological database, forming the foundation of modern understanding of the country's northern basins.

Every onshore survey and drilling campaign that followed — from the 1970s through to the contemporary re-evaluations of the Owambo and Etosha regions — builds upon that pioneering groundwork.

Etosha Petroleum never found oil, but it proved something equally vital: that beneath Namibia's dry northern plains lay a true sedimentary basin, one with real geological promise.

In that sense, Texas Eastern's short-lived venture planted the first scientific seed of Namibia's onshore petroleum industry — decades before the nation itself would come into being.

Monitor kept onshore exploration alive

Monitor Exploration's onshore push in Namibia began well before any partner arrived. In 2018, the Ministry of Mines and Energy awarded the company Petroleum Exploration Licence 93 (PEL 93), covering central onshore Blocks 1717 and 1817 in the Etosha–Owambo Basin. With tenure secured from the state, Monitor set about the methodical work that turns a licence into a drill decision:

compiling legacy gravity and magnetic datasets, tying them to surface geology, and designing a low-impact 2D seismic grid to ground-truth the structural trends it had mapped.

Before 88 Energy came on board, the equity on the licence was straightforward: Monitor as operator with a majority interest, Legend Oil Namibia as a minority partner, and NAMCOR holding a carried 10% state interest. The technical programme

in those early years was deliberately disciplined. The team reconciled historical datasets, refined basin models, prepared the environmental paperwork for seismic over defined Areas of Interest, and iterated structural and stratigraphic lead maps as new desktop work came in. Several closures and stratigraphic targets emerged from this pre-farm interpretation cycle, giving Monitor a shortlist to test once acquisition funding was in place.



The farm-in was agreed in late 2023. Under Stage 1, 88 Energy acquired an initial 20% non-operated working interest.

It provided two investment elements: a cash consideration to Monitor for past costs (about US\$0.7 million) and a carry of up to US\$3.0 million to fund the 2024 work programme, including roughly 200 line-kilometres of low-impact 2D seismic.

The transfer of the

first 20% closed in early 2024, with options for 88 Energy to earn up to 45% in later stages by funding subsequent budgets.

With funding secured, Monitor executed the seismic it had already scoped. The acquisition ran through 2024, and by December of that year, the processing and first-pass interpretation confirmed significant structures on multiple lines, outlining roughly ten to eleven independent leads across the 18,500

km² licence. Those results, integrated with legacy gravity and magnetics, set up a prospective resources estimate and the next stage of de-risking.

Regulatory progress followed the technical work. In mid-2025, the Ministry granted a 12-month extension to the First Renewal Exploration Period, moving the expiry to 2 October 2026. The extension came with defined commitments: a high-resolution airborne

gravity and magnetic survey, supplemented by radiometrics; integration of all datasets to support selection of an initial drilling location; completion of an environmental impact assessment for drilling; and a minimum gross spend of about US\$800,000 during the period. In parallel, the joint venture launched a Stage 1A pre-drill programme with an agreed maximum

commitment of up to US\$1 million to complete the airborne work and prospect ranking.

Ownership remains broad but stable. Following the first farm-in stage, 88 Energy holds 20% (non-operated) with the ability to increase to as much as 45% subject to spend; Legend Oil Namibia retains 15%; NAMCOR holds 10%; and Monitor continues as operator for the balance.

Investment has also localised. In October 2025, Monitor announced a strategic partnership with Windhoek-based Somerschild Investments, taking a shareholder position in the operator's Namibian subsidiary via a convertible instrument of up to N\$12.9 million (about US\$750,000). The funds are earmarked for basin and prospectivity studies that feed directly

into site selection for a first exploration well within the current licence window.

Taken together, the capital stack around PEL 93 now spans Monitor's original spend to assemble and interpret legacy datasets, 88 Energy's Stage 1 consideration and seismic carry (up to about US\$3.7 million in total), the Stage 1A pre-drill envelope of

up to US\$1 million, the government-mandated minimum spend during the extension, and Somerschild's local funding line. Set against the technical milestones—new 2D seismic in 2024, airborne geophysics in 2025, and environmental approvals in train—the licence is advancing along a clear path: finish integration, rank prospects, and take a drill location decision ahead of the 2 October 2026

deadline.

In a national narrative dominated by offshore discoveries, Monitor's story remains a textbook case of patient, data-led onshore exploration: secure tenure from the Ministry, build the subsurface picture from first principles, execute targeted surveys with partner funding, and move to drilling only when the pre-drill evidence supports it.



The Extractor
Mapping Namibia's Mineral Resources

Physical Address:

Sinclair office park, Sinclair
street, Eros

Website:

www.theextratormagazine.com

Subscriptions:

+264 81 848 4264

Editorial

Ndama: +264 81 765 7694

Sales and Marketing:

Ndama:

+264 81 765 7694

ndama@theextratormagazine.com

info@theextratormagazine.com

Design & Layout:

OAK Advertising studio
overcomercnc@gmail.com
+264 81 751 7470