

that can give way under one's feet at any time, WoF is employing a unique spike that they developed in Indonesia when they were asked, in 2015, to assist in fighting underground peat fires in South Sumatra.

This is the first time that this spike is being used in South Africa. Focusing on an 800 m<sup>2</sup>, WoF uses the power of the water that squirts out of holes along the spike to drill down into the ground and flood the peat from the bottom up. Nine 1.4 – 1.5 metre deep holes are drilled per square metre of land.

In their first day of operations on 1 May, WoF completed a 80 m<sup>2</sup> portion, but the land will need to be repeatedly flooded to extinguish the fires. While WoF normally operates on a 24-hour schedule, the dangerous conditions have forced them to only work during the day.

Wiseman Thulani Mbele, Type 2 Crew Leader from the Kleinmond base, is one of the members of the team. "This is the first time that we are doing this but so far, so good. The team just adapted, very easily and quickly."

Part of the many challenges facing WoF is that the ground has fractured into honeycomb cracks through which a strong-smelling combination of sulphates, carbon dioxide and methane are seeping. Tarron Dry, Overstrand Municipality: Environmental Officer, says they have taken infrared photos to determine the surface temperatures but, in some places, the fire goes down four metres. In areas towards the centre of where WoF is working, temperatures of 330 degrees Celsius have been recorded. "It's a very dangerous place to be working," he adds.

Shane Christian, National General Manager, says, "The project in the Overstrand is just one of our day-to-day challenges that come along, and we have to adapt."

Normally, WoF team members set up camp and make do in whatever environment they are put in. But this time, Camphill has donated its premises. "This is quite a luxury. We even have DSTv," jokes Shane.

Angelo Aplon, Overstrand Assistant Fire Chief, says the subsurface fire

---