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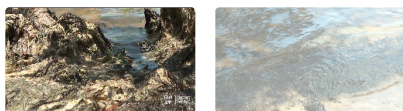
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Scientists believe blue-green algae bloom in Tampa Bay likely caused by Piney Point leak



Scientists say the worse than average bloom could be from Piney Point.



BRADENTON, Fla. — Every afternoon Paul Meunier rides his bike around the waters in Manatee County.

“I’ve been here six years and I haven’t seen the thickness of what’s been floating in the water,” said Meunier.

He’s never seen anything like the smelly algae bloom growing in Tampa Bay.

“It’s really thick on the other side of the persevere so thick the birds can walk on it,” Meunier said.

Scientists believe the blue-green algae called Lyngbya, growing at an alarming rate, could be a result of the 215 million gallons of polluted wastewater released from Piney Point in April.

“There’s a lot of circumstantial evidence that suggests that the releases brought a nitrogen and phosphorus load to our parts of the bay where this is blowing up on us,” said David Tomasko, executive director of Sarasota Bay Estuary Program.

Scientists from the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program said an excessive amount of algae could release toxins causing fish kills and a rotten egg-like odor.

“That rotten egg smell, that only forms when there’s no oxygen in the water. And so in areas where there’s not oxygen in the water if you’re a big fish you can just swim away, if you’re a small fish, you can’t go anywhere and basically those guys are going to just die,” said Tomasko.

It also irritates skin so swimming near it is not advised. The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program is advising local governments to remove as much of the algae from the water as possible and shut Piney point down for good.

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