

LOCAL NEWS >

# Treated water from Piney Point scheduled to be injected into underground well



BY CASEY ALBRITTON

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...one of Florida's largest  
...e long term impacts.

...y Point reservoir water is going to

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"I think Piney Point was the worst thing that has happened for Tampa Bay and Sarasota Bay in about 50 years," said Dr. Dave Tomasko with the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program.

"I don't know what's in it. No one has come to show us or to prove otherwise that we shouldn't be concerned," said Brittany May, who lives three miles from Piney Point.

It has been two years since what experts say is one of the worst environmental disasters in Florida's history.

"For folks who thought it was limited impact in time or in space, they're just not out in the field," said Dr. Tomasko.

On March 25, 2021, a phosphogypsum reservoir in Manatee County, called Piney Point, began to leak, threatening thousands of families who lived nearby.

"To be honest with you, it was a little scary. We have kids and it was kind of out of the blue...get up and go," said May.

Families all over the area were required to evacuate, and the solution to the problem? To dump 215 million gallons of contaminated water into Tampa Bay.

"I think it was the single biggest pollution event we've seen in 50 years," said Dr. Tomasko.

Now, two years later, residents who live around Piney Point are concerned.

"I don't trust the water unless there's a filter at this point," said May.

"I thought we should avoid it all costs, because we didn't trust it," said David Moreno who lives near Piney Point.



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...n gallons of water in Piney Point,  
...inject it into a deep well

...y. It's not a new technology," said  
Point

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"I have complete confidence that they know what they are doing and that they will do everything necessary to protect the community," said Donica.

"This is a risky project and Floridians don't need another risky project. We need accountability from the industry who makes millions of dollars off of our precious resources," said Ragan Whitlock with the Center for Biological Diversity.

Donica is in charge of closing down the site. He says the deep well is fool-proof.

"There's all kinds of safety measures that the manatee county has taken to drill that well. There's a monitoring well next to it. They will be doing tests all along. It's a very sensitive testing procedure that they will employ to make sure there's no problems," said Donica.

The deep injection well is a little over 3,000 feet below the ground, and the Florida aquifer that holds drinking water is roughly 1,400 feet below ground.

"Is there any chance that could possibly impact drinking water at all?" asked Tampa Bay Now's Casey Albritton. "No," said Donica.

He says the water has been cleaned for ground water well standards.

"It doesn't have any noticeable level of phosphorus," said Donica.

But Whitlock with the center for biological diversity is against the whole plan.

"Underground injection wells have failed in the past, and if this fails it would potentially impact our aquifer and our ground water resources," said Whitlock.

According to the center for health, environment and justice, there have been at least 61



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ay at this well," said Whitlock.

going into the injection well from which can cause cancer when ch can erode pipes. The water also e for drinking water, which can

"Their own testing still proves this is hazardous waste," said Whitlock.

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Whitlock's organization wants more to be done to protect the Florida aquifer.

"We want to see it treated, we want to see accountability. We want to see the industry who makes millions of dollars off of this waste be forced to treat it and store it in a proper manner," said Whitlock.

Both David Moreno and Brittany May say they want more communication on what could happen with their drinking water should anything go wrong.

"I don't really find it safe," said Moreno.

"I would like some reassurance that everything is going to be safe. I would like water levels and things in the water being shown, and what's actually in it. I'm concerned. I don't know if there's a safe way for them to do this," said May.

Officials say that water is scheduled to start being put into that underground well in April.

In: [Florida](#) [Tampa Bay](#)

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