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MANATEE COUNTY

Contamination from Piney Point spill detected as far away as Tarpon Springs

by: [Jeff Patterson](#)

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MANATEE COUNTY, Fla. (WFLA) — A new study shows contaminated wastewater from the former Piney Point fertilizer plant spread much further than originally suspected.

In March of 2021, leaks were found in the containment walls of the plant. Stored at the top of the phosphogypsum stack were more than 400 million gallons of highly contaminated wastewater.

In April, fearing the containment walls would collapse and flood the surrounding community, officials released more than 200 million gallons of wastewater from the plant into Tampa Bay.

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Now a study shows that wastewater traveled as far as Tarpon Springs.

“What we found is that the water that was discharged at Piney Point had an isotopic signature that no one had ever seen before in Florida,” said David Tomasko the Executive Director of the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program.

The isotopic signature allowed researchers to track the flow of the contaminated wastewater, but finding the signature at a test sight in Tarpon Springs was a surprise.

“I think it’s the worst thing that happened in decades,” said Tomasko.

He says the contamination contributed to red tide in the Gulf of Mexico.

“Functionally, it’s as if we had 10 billion gallons of wastewater spill out into the bay in 10 days. Of course, you are going to have a horrible red tide,” said Tomasko.

He says the impact of the spill will be seen for some time to come.

“We don’t even know how big the impacts are because it’s still too early,” said Tomasko.

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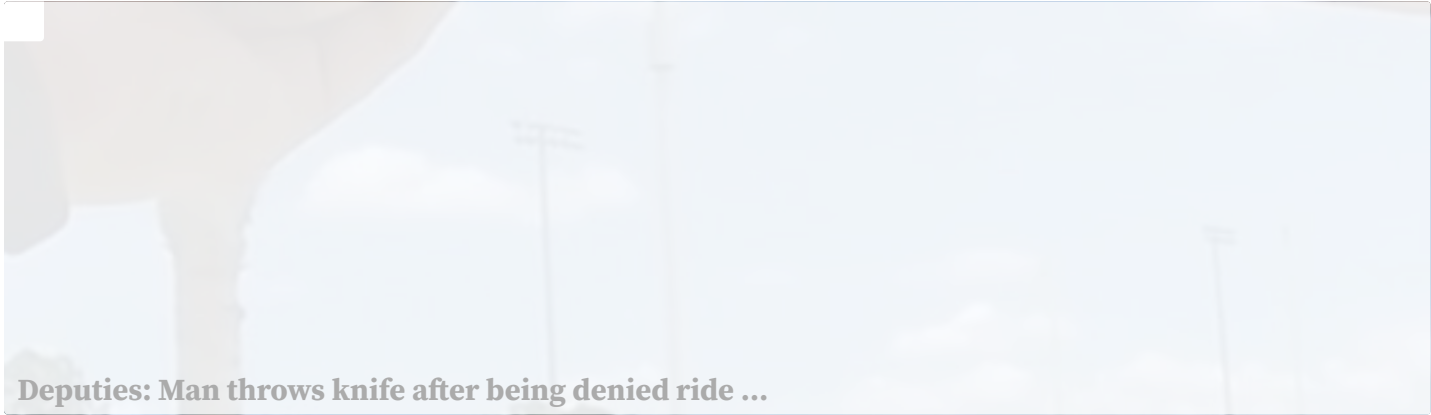
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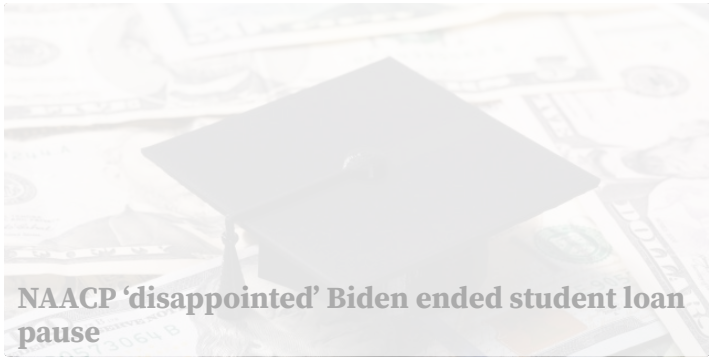
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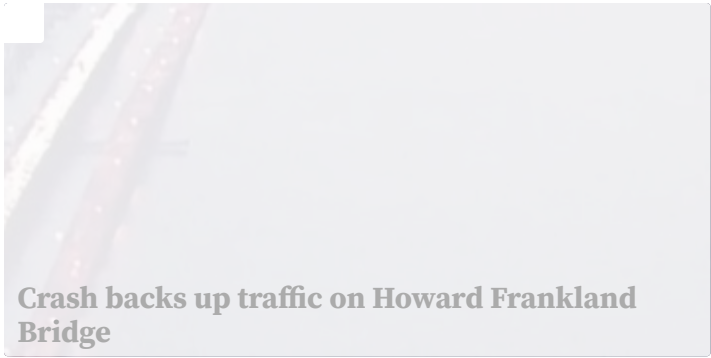
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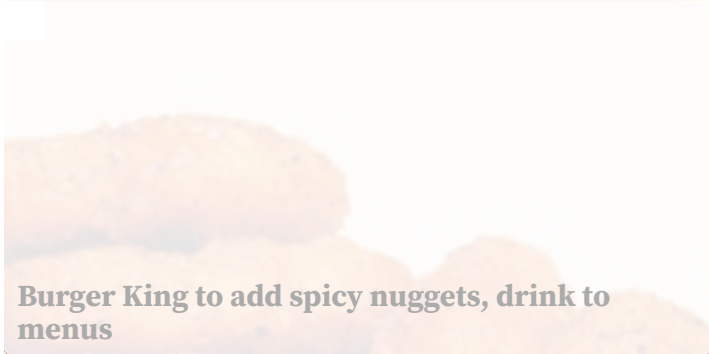
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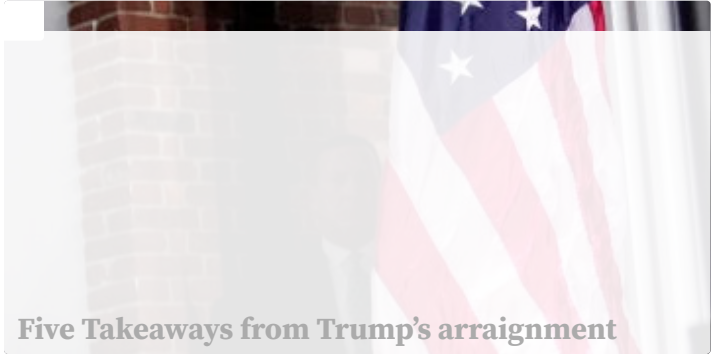
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