

# Scientists study distance of effects of Piney Point incident in Tampa, Sarasota Bays



WWSB ABC7 News at 6pm

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PALMETTO Fla. (WWSB) - A recently released study and an upcoming study are working to show the long-range effects of the phosphogypsum stack leaks at Piney Point in Palmetto.

Dave Tomasko of the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program is one of the authors of the study that has proven that the ramifications of the collapse of infrastructure at Piney Point carried further north than originally suspected. A future study to be published will also look at a model that predicts the total widespread effects of the pollution, even potentially linking it to Lyngbya found in Sarasota Bay.

In March of 2021, crews discovered a leak in the phosphogypsum stacks. An emergency order was issued in response to leaks that could have potentially caused collapse. Evacuations were ordered in the immediate aftermath of the incident.

Many organizations began monitoring the discharge water, which the study shows was full of inorganic nutrients such as ammonium and orthophosphate.

Tomasko explained to ABC7 that as the scientists began collecting samples from four separate sites in different locations. The sites include Piney Point Creek, which is connected to the Piney Point facility via drainage canals, Bishop Harbor and Joe Bay, and St. Joseph Sound.

Water samples were collected on a bi-weekly basis from April 2021 until April 2022. The samples began to show some of the inorganic elements that were tested near Piney Point and the rate of the production of phytoplankton and harmful algae, further north than expected at St. Joseph Sound near Tarpon Springs. The leakage showed a specific chemical marker that was unique and thus slightly easier to track.

Tomasko also said that an upcoming study approved for publication would feature the use of the University of South Florida's Hydrodynamic Model which is allowing scientists to have a better understanding of the path of the plume of leakage from Piney Point.

Potentially the plume could have spread from Clearwater to the Manatee River and upper Sarasota Bay. Tomasko also stated that the latest study shows probability that Lyngbya found in Manatee and Sarasota Bay could potentially be linked to Piney Point as well.

used to create fertilizer but can also be turned into phosphoric acid, which is also used in some types of animal feed and some types of cosmetics.

About 90 percent of domestic production happens in the southern U.S. with Florida accounting for 80% of that.

You can read the study in full [here](#).

You can look at the plume monitored by the USF College of Marine Science [here](#).

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