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[Home](#) | [Employee Directory](#) | [Help](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Search](#)

- [▶ Home Communications](#)
- [▶ Governor's Press Office](#)
- [▶ DEP Press Releases](#)
- [▶ Opinion Editorials](#)
- [▶ Secretary Struhs](#)

Topics

- ▶ Air Quality
- ▶ Florida ODES
- ▶ Florida's RIVERS
- ▶ Non-Point Pollution
- ▶ ODES
- ▶ ODES Events
- ▶ Permitting
- ▶ Resources

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE August 28, 2001

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DEP TAKES SWIFT ACTION TO STABILIZE ABANDONED PHOSPHATE PLANT

--Potential environmental spill at a bankrupt phosphate manufacturer averted--

MULBERRY -- Department of Environmental Protection Deputy Secretary Allan Bedwell today announced the start up of a treated process water pipeline system between the Mulberry Phosphate Facility and Cargill Fertilizer, Inc.'s nearby SR-North containment pond in Mulberry, Florida.

The new pipeline system, a result of cooperation among DEP, Cargill, IMC Phosphate, the Florida Phosphate Council, IT Corporation, Ardaman & Associates, CSX, and CF Industries was constructed in a record 35 days and is designed to transport partially treated process water from the Mulberry facility to a Cargill Fertilizer retention pond three miles east of Mulberry. This process water, had it been allowed to remain at the now closed Mulberry facility, would have presented a serious environmental hazard. An uncontrolled release of this highly acidic water into surrounding streams and ditches that ultimately flow into Tampa Bay and the Alafia River would have harmed aquatic ecosystems.

DEP and the phosphate industry came together in a combined effort to protect Florida's environment. Cargill Fertilizer agreed to take 300 million gallons of partially treated process water from Mulberry if it could be transported by pipeline to a retention pond. In record time, the pipeline was designed and bid upon, easements were negotiated and finalized, the pipeline was constructed and is now operational. Normally, such an effort would take many months. The pipeline crosses the property of CF Industries, Inc. and Cargill under a county road and the CSX railroad

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tracks, and ultimately will discharge the over 300 million gallons of the 2.5 billion gallons into a permitted surface pond owned by Cargill over the next 120 days. This multimillion-gallon draw down will protect the surrounding area from a potential overflow of process water during the next rainy season. If these 300 million gallons are not siphoned off, the rain could cause the holding tanks to overflow, thus affecting the ground water, nearby rivers, and even Tampa Bay.

“We were not going to stand by and allow the difficulties facing Mulberry Corporation to create difficulties for the residents of the affected areas,” said Bedwell. “We felt that it was vital to work with the phosphate industry and all those concerned to take immediate action to protect the environment.”

The Department’s action plan, with input from Ardaman & Associates, Inc., a highly qualified engineering firm, quickly determined what was required to secure the site environmentally, and identified the actions needed to maximize environmental security.

IT Corporation, a Pittsburgh-based, wholly owned subsidiary of The IT Group, has been on site performing emergency response efforts under the direction of the DEP and the court appointed receiver, Louis Timchak. The IT Corporation, selected as an emergency response contractor by the DEP through its competitive bidding process, initiated its work in early February.

IT Corporation team’s primary responsibilities include operating and maintaining the facilities, increasing on-site process water storage capacity and developing and implementing plans to move this water off site by truck and by pipeline. Working closely with Ardaman & Associates, Inc., DEP, the phosphate industry -- through the Florida Phosphate Council -- and IT Corporation increased the on-site storage capacity and, to date, has transported over 27 million gallons off site to IMC Phosphates Company facilities by truck in a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week push.

It is important to note that the state is not funding the work at this plant at the expense of its other environmental interests. A budget amendment in February allowed DEP to use up to \$4 million from the Nonmandatory Land Reclamation Trust Fund (NLRTF) to maintain the environmental integrity of the Mulberry Phosphates and Piney Point phosphogypsum stack systems at sites. The NLRTF is funded by contributions from

the severance tax paid to the state by the phosphate mining companies.

During the 2001 legislative session, Governor Bush, in partnership with the phosphate industry and the legislature: (a) created a reserve of \$50 million within the NLRTF for use for the closure of abandoned mines or phosphogypsum stack systems and also for the abatement of imminent hazards from phosphogypsum stack systems; (b) assessed a fee of \$75,000 per phosphogypsum stack per year for the next five years - the fee is to be deposited in the NLRTF; and (c) appropriated \$16 million from the NLRTF, for the fiscal year 2001-2002, to carry out environmental work at the Mulberry Phosphates and Piney Point sites.

By the end of August 2001, the state will have spent approximately \$14 million on the two sites. The expenditures are primarily related to personnel, power, dam and dike construction, and the treatment and transport of process water to other facilities by pipeline and by trucks.

01-164-016
August 29, 2001