

Old Piney Point acid plant file. *Al*

SWS/TW

Phosphate plant purchases equipment to begin repairs

Despite concerns from the county, Piney Point Phosphates does not plan to wait for state approval before refurbishing its plant.

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Herald Staff Writer

Manatee County is waiting on the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

DEP is waiting for Piney Point Phosphates.

But Piney Point isn't waiting for anyone.

Ivan Nance, corporate environmental manager for Piney Point, confirmed Tuesday some equipment has been purchased to refurbish the phosphate processing plant in northern Manatee County that is slated to reopen later this year.

The only work being done on the plant, however, is to auxiliary facil-

ities, he said, not to the sulfuric acid plant — the portion of the plant that has raised concerns with the county.

"There's a grave misconception going on that we are going to spend 10 months out there doing these repairs," he said. "Some of the equipment hasn't even been ordered, and it won't be here until mid-summer."

But Nance added the plant would not wait to receive approval from DEP before refurbishing the plant, and would request an administrative hearing if DEP required the plant to go through the permitting process.

In December, plant officials announced it would reopen its plant later this year after spending \$13-\$18 million to update equipment which has lain dormant since 1992.



Manatee's environment

Piney Point officials contend the work is routine maintenance.

The county, however, believes the plant is essentially reconstructing its facility and should go through the same DEP permitting process it would undergo if it were building a new plant.

David Dee, the county's consulting attorney on Piney Point, received permission from the county to file a complaint with DEP after he heard rumors that the plant had already purchased about \$2 million of equipment and had begun work on the plant.

Before the county can continue with any action it might take — including a lawsuit against the plant — it must give DEP 30 days to investigate and respond to the complaint.

Dee filed the suit on March 3, just a week after officials of Manatee County Environmental Management, DEP and Piney Point met at Piney Point to discuss what was

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being done there.

After the meeting, Al Linero, DEP's administrator for the new source review section said he's waiting on information from Piney Point before deciding whether the plant needed to go through the permitting process.

"We came out understanding the project better," Linero said on March 3. "They will give us a little more information, and we will get back with them."

The county believes the plant would not meet DEP's new source performance standards, endanger the county's health through its emissions and pollute Manatee County's watershed.

But Nance said the plant would not pollute the air, and has met new source performance standards since 1975 when the county helped to pay for modifications to meet those standards.

If it were determined Piney Point needed a permit, Linero's division would review the application, he said.

Nance said Piney Point would ask for a hearing if they were told to go through construction permitting through DEP.

F.Y.I.

D. Dee

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