

CHARLIE CRIST

13TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

www.crist.house.gov

215 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-5961

696 1ST AVENUE NORTH, SUITE 203
ST. PETERSBURG, FL 33701
(727) 318-6770

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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-0913

April 7, 2021

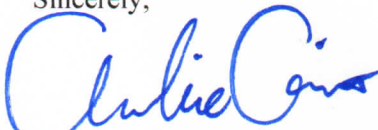
Steve Jurczyk, Acting Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E St SW
Washington, DC 20546

Dear Acting Administrator Jurczyk,

I write to bring your attention to the potentially disastrous situation unfolding at Piney Point, an abandoned phosphate plant located in Manatee County, Florida on Tampa Bay. In an effort to prevent a collapse in one of the plant's phosphogypsum stack containment walls holding back toxic water, Governor DeSantis directed the State to discharge the water into Tampa Bay. The State reports that the discharged water fails marine standards for pH, phosphorus, nitrogen, and ammonia nitrogen. I worry that dumping millions of gallons of polluted water into Tampa Bay may have severe consequences, including increased risk of harmful algae blooms (HAB) in Tampa Bay and the Gulf of Mexico.

As you know, NASA's Landsat satellites are critical tools for early detection and tracking of HABs. They are quite literally our bird's eye view over threatened bodies of water. As a member of the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittee, I am proud to support NASA – not just the Human Exploration Program but also the critical science missions NASA supports. NASA was an important partner during the 2017-2019 red tide outbreak that plagued Pinellas County, and my constituents are once again counting on NASA to be their eye in the sky. In partnership with the United States Geological Survey and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NASA images help identify HABs earlier and improve HAB forecasts. Early warning saved an estimated \$370,000 in health care costs during a 2017 HAB outbreak in Utah. I encourage NASA surveillance not only over Tampa Bay and the nearby coast in the Gulf of Mexico, but also specifically at Piney Point and Port Manatee where the discharges are occurring. In addition, I encourage NASA to capture images of Piney Point, Port Manatee, and Tampa Bay and update those images with each overhead pass of a Landsat. This will help identify possible trouble earlier and assure my constituents who are concerned about our water. We will continue praying for the best, knowing full well that NASA remains on the lookout. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Charlie Crist
UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN

CC: Senator Bill Nelson