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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-0913  
April 6, 2021

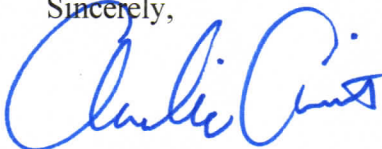
The Honorable Benjamin Friedman, Acting Administrator  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Floor 6, Room 62008  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Acting Administrator Friedman,

You probably have seen the horrific and potentially disastrous situation unfolding at Piney Point, an abandoned phosphate plant located in Manatee County, Florida on Tampa Bay. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has warned that a leak in one of the plant's phosphogypsum stack containment walls could trigger a catastrophic collapse, releasing hundreds of millions of gallons of toxic wastewater into the surrounding community and, ultimately, Tampa Bay. In an effort to prevent a collapse, Governor DeSantis has directed the State to discharge the toxic water into Tampa Bay. You may already know that the discharged water fails marine standards for pH, phosphorus, nitrogen, and ammonia nitrogen. I am concerned 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 a member of the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittee, I proudly support NOAA's HAB research, monitoring, and forecasting. Now, Tampa Bay residents, including my constituents in Pinellas County, are counting on NOAA to bring all resources to bear as Tampa Bay and the Gulf of Mexico faces increased risk of harmful algae from the toxic discharges. During the most recent red tide event in 2017 and 2018, our region was devastated with the loss of jobs, loss of marine life, and loss of the clean water we all depend on. In an effort to give my constituents as much time as possible to prepare for the potential consequences of these toxic discharges, I request that you begin providing a weekly, public Harmful Algal Bloom Forecast for Tampa Bay and coastal areas along the Gulf of Mexico where contaminants from the Piney Point discharges are detected. I ask that you continue to provide these weekly forecasts until the threat has passed. We will continue praying for the best, as we count on NOAA to help us prepare for the worst. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Charlie Crist  
UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN