



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
JOHN PEYTON
MAYOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MAYOR PEYTON'S STATEMENT ON GEORGIA PACIFIC PIPELINE AND AQUIFER WITHDRAWALS

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., Aug. 6, 2008 – Jacksonville Mayor John Peyton today released the following statement:

“Collectively, we have taken great steps to improve the health of the St. Johns River in the last few years. However, I am deeply concerned that Georgia Pacific’s plans to construct a wastewater pipeline from its Palatka facility directly to the middle of the St. Johns could have significant long-term impacts on water quality and aquatic life. Put simply, I oppose the construction of the pipeline in its current form and believe that Georgia Pacific should be required to use more updated technology to ensure the health of our river.

I am committed to doing all that is within my power as Mayor of Jacksonville to ensure continued protection of the river and to push for alternative to the pipeline. The current plan does not adequately safeguard our river, its aquatic life or the communities through which it flows. I strongly urge the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to re-evaluate the necessity of the pipeline or to pursue additional technologies that can be used to reduce the pollutants going into the river.

I am deeply appreciative of Gov. Charlie Crist and Sen. Jim King’s support of this great natural resource and laud their efforts to secure funding to protect it.

I ask that the Governor and FDEP Secretary Mike Sole join in this review and re-consider the settlement reached years ago that does not move us forward in our effort to enhance water quality in our most valuable resource – the St. Johns River. The people of Jacksonville and all those living up and down the river deserve better.

This plan has been in the making for nearly a decade – ever since the facility encountered regulatory and community resistance for fouling Rice Creek, the tributary that runs directly beside the mill. A permit was issued in 2002 that required Georgia Pacific to implement technology improvements and upgrades and water quality monitoring in advance of the pipeline’s construction. The company has recently announced plans to begin construction of the pipeline.

While I have great respect for the progress that Georgia Pacific has made in reducing pollution from the plant, Georgia Pacific and FDEP must further explore technologies to address the mill’s wastewater. I understand that the 2002 permit was based on known science at that time. However, we must consider advancements in both science and technology in the reevaluation of a six-year-old regulatory decision that is critical to the health of our river, the water-borne species in it and the people who depend upon it.

Of great concern is the presence of dioxin in the proposed discharge. Dioxin accumulation over time has the potential to cause grave physiological changes in aquatic life.



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This is especially significant in light of the Seminole County proposal to withdraw millions of gallons of water from the river for irrigation and drinking purposes. Withdrawals could yield an even greater concentration of harmful pollutants.

I would further note that the pipeline compromise was reached before Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) implications were fully studied and understood. Now that the significance of nutrient loading in the river is better understood and quantified, the pipeline's discharge of nutrients into the St. Johns should be reevaluated.

While the intent of the pipeline, as currently stated, is to restore Rice Creek, this cannot be done at the cost of potential accumulation of dangerous pollutants in the main stem of the river.

Rice Creek is referred to as a "captured" water body and has no flow or ability to flush out the waste water. In fact, during dry periods, the composition of the creek has sometimes been mostly wastewater from the mill.

The stretch of the river where the pipeline is proposed has very little natural flow. Time-lapse modeling performed by the St. Johns River Water Management District shows that it can take a full week or longer for pollutants to dissipate in that part of the river.

Later this year, the FDEP is expected to issue a notice of intent to renew Georgia Pacific's operating permit. I have directed my staff to carefully review the draft permit, when issued, to ensure the continued protection of our precious St. John's River and to determine if our concerns are resolved. If the pipeline's impact on the St. Johns River is not adequately addressed, I would expect to challenge the permit through the administrative hearing process. *

Another growing concern is the commercial drain on Florida's already dwindling freshwater supplies. The Floridan Aquifer is a precious resource that must be preserved. Currently, two permits for bottling plants have been the subject of much debate and challenge in Marion and Lake Counties. I plan to carefully study current activity and I'd like to take this opportunity to encourage stepped-up discussion on public policy regarding commercial depletion and whether these activities serve everyone's best interest. After all, if we don't protect our natural resources, who will?"

<<Attached: Letter from Mayor Peyton to Governor Crist>>

* Note: *FDEP is expected to issue a renewal permit in late 2008 or early 2009. It is expected to be substantially similar to the permit issued in August 2002 with some expected modifications to the monitoring program. A Notice of Intent to issue the permit will be published. The notification will trigger a 14-day period within which the City of Jacksonville and others may request an administrative hearing on the permit renewal.*

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