

Georgia Water Coalition Dirty Dozen

- 2014-10-22: 2014's Worst Offenses Against GEORGIA'S WATER
- WITHLACOOCHEE RIVER & FLORIDAN AQUIFER: Gas Pipeline Threatens Southwest Georgia Water, Way of Life

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Gas Pipeline Threatens Southwest Georgia Water, Way of Life

INTRODUCTION:
Southwest Georgians are fighting an invader—one every bit as worrisome as the boll weevil that destroyed cotton harvests in the 1900s, except this one takes farmers' land as well as crops. The 21st century invader is a 500-mile-long, 3-foot-diameter natural gas pipeline running from Alabama to central Florida that will cut a 159-mile-long, 100-foot-wide swath through at least nine Georgia counties, bringing with it the risk of contaminating the region's well water and rivers and streams through leaks as well as noise and air pollution from a compressor station located in a densely populated area near Albany. The Sabal Trail underground pipeline will feed Florida Power & Light (FPL) electric generation facilities in central Florida, but studies show that the Sunshine State utility could generate the same amount of electricity with solar power while impacting half as much land.

THE WATER BODIES:
The Sabal Trail pipeline's path across southwest Georgia would require boring underground pipelines beneath the Withlacoochee, Flint and Chattahoochee rivers as well as numerous smaller streams, and will course underground above the Floridan aquifer. The Floridan aquifer is the region's most important water source, providing more than 600 million gallons a day to irrigate crops, run industries and supply homes and businesses with drinking water. The currently proposed pipeline route runs through Stewart, Webster, Terrell, Lee, Dougherty, Mitchell, Colquitt, Lowndes and Brooks counties—a swath of land that is home to rare wildlife including the Georgia state reptile—the federally endangered gopher tortoise—along with the federally protected indigo snake and red cockaded woodpecker. Other communities in the region may be impacted depending on the final route chosen.

THE DIRT:
While the Sabal Trail pipeline's parent companies, Spectra Energy and NextERA Energy would have residents believe their 3-foot-diameter pipe is a benign neighbor, the history of gas pipeline accidents and environmental ills paints a different picture.

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