

Algae blooms are part of Scott's legacy Tallahassee Must Decide If They Want Clean Water or Poison

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Lake 0 two years ago. It is much worse now.

Scott's bull-headed follies are now catching up with him. Sooner or later we must pay the price to fix this. It will not be cheap, but the current situation is not acceptable and it is not going away.

Tallahassee must decide if they want clean water or poison. Blaming the U.S. government is not the solution. Stopping the nitrates is the solution, and we can do that if we want to.

It just takes money and lots of it.

Read the original article in the [Gainesville Sun](#).

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

-A river is like a life: once taken, it cannot be brought back-

Editorial: Algae blooms are part of Scott's legacy

By The Gainesville Sun editorial board

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Gov. Rick Scott is facing an environmental crisis of his own making.

Scott issued an emergency order Monday in response to the toxic algae bloom covering most of Lake Okeechobee. Such declarations won't undo years of environmental degradation allowed in Florida under Scott and other Republican officials.

Their current solution is typical, requiring hundreds of

millions of taxpayer dollars to be spent cleaning up a mess that elected officials helped create. Repairing the dike around Lake Okeechobee and building a new reservoir might prevent water releases from further contaminating the river systems around the lake, but such steps fail to address the pollution fueling algae blooms.

Scott and the GOP-controlled Legislature have made it easier to pollute Florida's natural environment during his two terms in office. They've slashed the budgets of water managers, eliminated an agency that regulated growth, cut enforcement of environmental regulations and spent money slated for land conservation on other uses.

Scott is a climate-change denier whose agencies were forbidden to use the words climate change much less do anything about it. A recent report in the Tampa Bay Times suggests that climate change makes algae blooms such as the one in Lake Okeechobee and a long-running red tide along Florida's west coast more likely to occur.

Climate change is causing water to warm and tends to produce more rain, leading to more runoff into water bodies. Warming water – combined with runoff from agricultural operations, septic tanks and other sources – can cause algae blooms that used to be smaller and more sporadic to be bigger and longer lasting.

The bloom in Lake Okeechobee was estimated earlier this month to cover 90 percent of the 730-square-mile lake, with its green color able to be seen from space. Algae blooms are also happening to the east and west of the lake in the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee river systems, a problem that also occurred two years ago after water releases from the lake.

The algae can kill animals, can cause respiratory problems and

other health issues in humans, and has been linked to diseases such as Alzheimer's and ALS. It also causes economic damage to businesses that rely on tourism and outdoor activities such as boating and fishing.

Scott has blamed the federal government rather than take responsibility for his administration's role in the environmental crisis. His emergency order – which requires steps such as expanded water testing and clean-up grants – is too little, too late.

Scott is now running for the U.S. Senate and Agricultural Commissioner Adam Putnam is running for governor. Both have been hostile to meaningful environmental regulations, instead favoring voluntary measures to control pollution from agricultural operations such as the sugarcane growers in the Everglades area.

Voters need to keep their environmental records in mind when casting ballots in the upcoming elections. From the polluted and depleted springs in our region to the algae blooms to the south, voters can see for themselves what happens when elected officials fail to protect the environment.