

# Sabal Trail Protesters' Court Dates To Be Set

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In this file photo, law enforcement officers on are shown looking for Karrie Ford and Nicholas Segal-Wright, two protestors who crawled inside the the Sabal Trail pipeline near the Halpata Tastanaki Preserve near Dunnellon on Feb. 22. [ALAN YOUNGBLOOD/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER]

This article about the Sabal Trail pipeline protestors is in the March 27, 2016 [Gainesville Sun](#). The entire article can be seen [here](#).

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

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

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## Protesters' court dates to be set

By Katie Pohlman

Staff writer

A pitch-black, 3-½-foot wide metal tube probably isn't where most people would choose to spend a day. But, on Feb. 22, two environmental activists couldn't think of a better place to be.



Karrie Ford

“When you're standing up for something you believe in so much, those discomforts are put on the wayside,” said Karrie Kay Ford, 29, of Gainesville.

Ford and Nicholas “Niko” Segal-Wright, 25, of Lake Worth, climbed about 250 feet into a section of the Sabal Trail Pipeline that day in Marion County as a form of civil disobedience, Ford said, to protest the multistate project. The two were set to be arraigned in Ocala on Tuesday, but Ford waived her arraignment and Segal-Wright waived his appearance at arraignment. Segal-Wright's lawyers will still attend the court date for him. New court dates for further hearings will be assigned to both cases on Tuesday.



Nicholas  
Segal-Wright

The pipeline is a project of Sabal Trail Transmission, a joint venture between Spectra Energy, NextEra Energy and Duke Energy. The 515-mile, \$3.2 billion pipeline will transport gas through Alabama, Georgia and much of northern Florida. About 1 billion cubic feet of natural gas is expected to be transported through the pipeline per day, providing energy to Floridians across the state.

Ford and Segal-Wright and others in a group she said was called Sabal Trail Resistance have been protesting the pipeline because of, they say, the potential impact on the Floridan aquifer and the almost 700 bodies of water it will cross.

"We're all working to stop this pipeline that would endanger the Florida aquifer, species like the Florida panther and Florida communities that are largely agricultural and impoverished," Segal-Wright said.

On Feb. 22, other protesters carrying signs stood along the road at the site in Marion County. But that wasn't enough for Ford and Segal-Wright.

"We've tried petitioning and protesting in other ways," Segal-Wright said. "We've tried going to (Marion County) commission meetings. That kind of protest has not given us results we needed."

When the idea of entering the pipeline emerged in group

discussions, the two jumped at the chance to do so.

“The point in direct action or civil disobedience is to take matters into your own hands rather than expecting government to take care of the problems,” Ford said.

Segal-Wright and Ford entered the pipeline the morning of Feb. 22. They used common protest devices to both connect themselves together and anchor themselves in the pipeline.

Ford had the anchoring device – a PVC pipe in a rubber bin filled with cement – on one arm and the connector on the other. She said the devices had multiple items around them like tar and chicken wire, making them hard to cut.

The two planned to stay in the pipeline as long as necessary. Segal-Wright said one of their demands was for the project’s environmental impact statement to be reread and reconsidered.

After a few hours, Marion County Sheriff’s Office personnel arrived.

“The police didn’t play nice,” Segal-Wright said.

The two remember authorities hitting the outside of the pipeline with a hammer, creating loud vibrations inside, to force them out. Ford said they threatened to send dogs into the pipeline to get them.

After four hours of negotiating, according to agency reports, a special operations team from Marion County Fire Rescue was sent in to complete what spokesman James Lucas called a “confined space rescue.”

Segal-Wright claims they tied a rope to his ankle and pulled him out.

Ford said she yelled at them that they were going to break her arm if they kept pulling, but they didn't stop.

The arrest report states the rescue was performed out of concern for the health and welfare of Ford and Segal-Wright. Officials didn't think they had enough air in the pipeline.

"Both of us kept checking in with each other," Ford said. "We both, over and over, said we were OK to each other and the fire department."

"The point when the oxygen was getting thin was when (the rescuers) came in," Segal-Wright added.

Neither protester regrets their decision to climb into the pipeline and stay there as long as possible.

"I know what I stand for," Ford said. "I stand for clean water. I stand for a clean environment."

Ford and Segal-Wright were charged with grand theft over \$20,000, trespassing on a construction site and criminal mischief. Ford also was charged with resisting an officer without violence because they were forced to cut one protesting device off of her arm.

Both have entered pleas of not guilty to all counts. They hope the charges will be dropped in court.

Sabal Trail's head of security told authorities that three sections of the pipe were rendered "useless" and would have to be replaced. The estimated cost was \$28,000, according to an MCSO report.

Ford and Segal-Wright adamantly say they did not damage the pipeline. Ford said the inside is really tough metal and they had no instruments with which to cause any damage.

“We know that destruction of property is a whole other level of charges, which we’re not interested in,” Ford said.

Sabal Trail spokeswoman Andrea Grover said the pipeline will run from Alexandria, Alabama, to near Interstate 4 in Central Florida and will supply natural gas for electric production by Florida Power and Light and Duke Energy, and will link up with another pipeline near I-4 to supply FP& L in Martin County.

A branch of the Sabal Trail pipeline will spur off to Crystal River to feed a planned Duke natural gas powered electric plant. Heather Danenhowe, with Duke Energy in Crystal River, said the gas supply to the Crystal River location should be complete by October. A compressor station is planned for Dunnellon in 2020.

Ford and Segal-Wright said they will continue to participate in protests whenever possible.

“You can stand on the side of the road and hold a sign all day long, but well behaved movements don’t make history,” Segal-Wright said. – *Contact Katie Pohlman at 867-4065, [katie.pohlman@starbanner.com](mailto:katie.pohlman@starbanner.com) or [@katie\\_pohlman](https://www.instagram.com/katie_pohlman).*