

## Exploratory Oil Drilling Proposed in Calhoun and Gulf Counties of Florida Panhandle

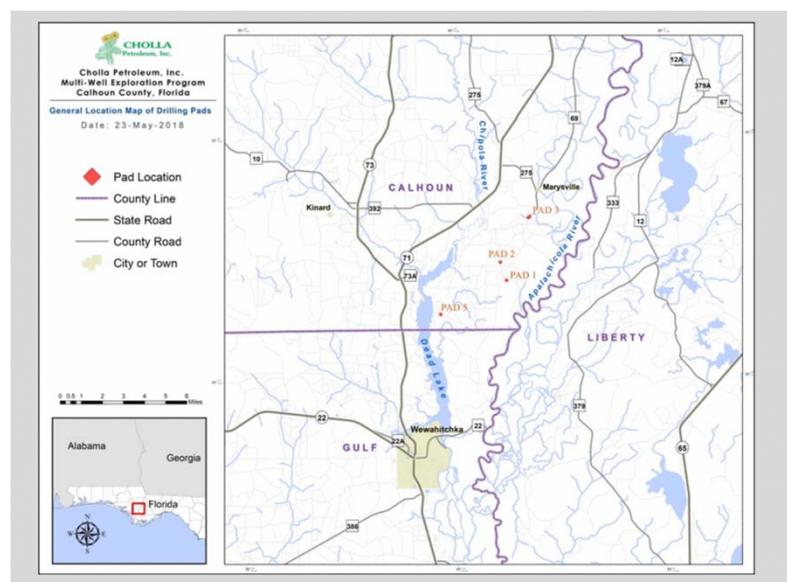
Exploratory oil drilling applications submitted by two out-of-state petroleum companies are under review by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FL DEP). *DEP's Oil and Gas Program is responsible for permitting and oversight of drilling and well operations in Florida.*

In Calhoun County, **Cholla Petroleum** seeks permission to drill 6 oil wells between the Chipola River, Dead Lakes, and the Apalachicola River. These applications were submitted in 2018, prior to Hurricane Michael, and remain under consideration. **A decision by DEP to allow or deny drilling by Cholla Petroleum is expected on or before October 29, 2019.**

Apalachicola Riverkeeper submitted comments of opposition to the 6 oil wells proposed by Cholla Petroleum to FL DEP. Comments found at [www.apalachicolariverkeeper.org](http://www.apalachicolariverkeeper.org). We will continue to work with community members and partner organizations concerned about the potential harmful ecological and economic impact of onshore drilling in North Florida. Permit documents, questions or comments of concern/opposition can be directed to the Tallahassee office of [DEP's Oil & Gas program](http://www.floridadep.gov/water/oil-gas). [www.floridadep.gov/water/oil-gas](http://www.floridadep.gov/water/oil-gas) Phone: 850-717-9110



**Cholla Petroleum's** drilling pads, a total of 4 pads for the 6 wells, would be located within the Apalachicola River basin and close to flowing river water. About ninety-five percent of the Apalachicola River floodplain is connected aquatic habitat. During major flood events which are occurring more frequently, the drilling pads would be surrounded by flowing water. The Apalachicola and Chipola Rivers flow to the Apalachicola Bay.



Of additional concern is the downstream City of Port St. Joe's drinking water supply. The freshwater intake canal for the city of Port St. Joe is in the Chipola River, within the floodplain of Apalachicola River and 30 to 35 river miles downstream of the proposed drilling pad sites. At high flows, the velocity is at least 2 miles per hour, meaning that oil contaminants could reach this drinking water intake canal in less than one day.

Hydrogen sulfide, a gas commonly found during the drilling and production of crude oil and natural gas, is also of significant concern. If these exploratory wells were to discover a

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sizable oil field, the drilling pads would be used for production wells. And were a viable oilfield to be developed, it would require an industrial-scale hydrogen sulfide removal plant and processing plant to be constructed nearby those drilling pads. Additionally, if an oilfield is established, the mode of transportation of crude oil to a refinery is unknown.

**In Gulf County, one exploratory oil well application was submitted by *Spoooner Petroleum*** in July 2019 near Wetappo Creek, west of the Dead Lakes. It is called the Bear Creek well. Portions of the St. Andrew Bay watershed and the Apalachicola River watershed are in Gulf County, connected by the intracoastal waterway. The Apalachicola River is Gulf County's eastern boundary. Related, in Spring 2018, Spoooner Petroleum drilled an exploratory well in Calhoun County. It came up dry.

Apalachicola Riverkeeper submitted comments of opposition to DEP on this permit application.

On October 9, 2019, DEP issued a “Notice of intent to Issue Drilling Permit Oil & Gas Drilling Application” for the Bear Creek-Spooner exploratory well. Questions, comments of concern and permit documents can be directed to the Tallahassee office of DEP’s Oil & Gas program. <https://floridadep.gov/water/oil-gas> Cindy Mulkey, Program Administrator, 850-717-9110



Figure 2-2 Apalachicola River and Bay Watershed



**Apalachicola Riverkeeper, part of Waterkeepers Florida and the international Waterkeeper Alliance, is dedicated to the protection and stewardship of the Apalachicola River and Bay. More information about the independent, non-profit organization can be found at [www.apalachicolariverkeeper.org](http://www.apalachicolariverkeeper.org)**