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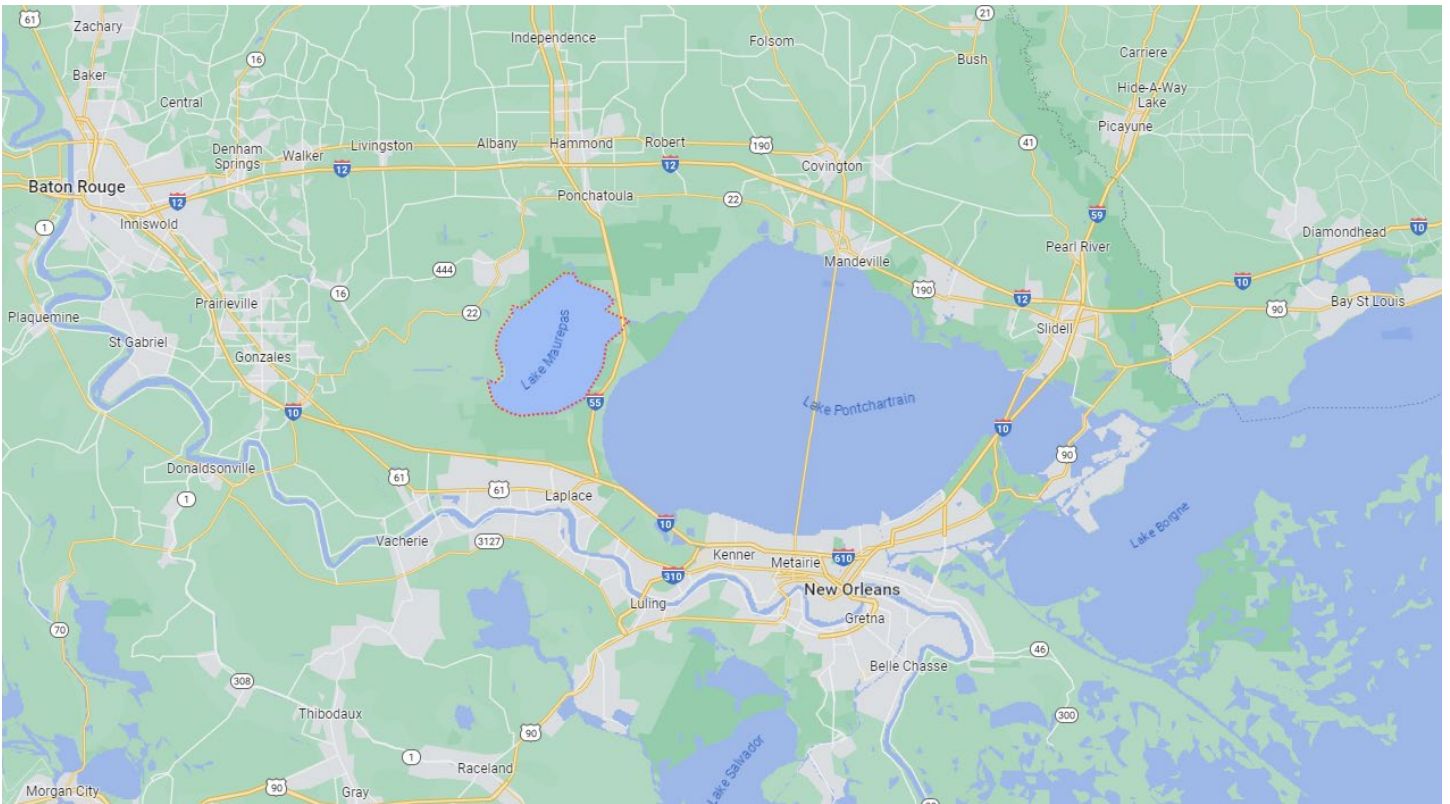
(Carbon capture controversy in my home state.)

# LOUISIANA ILLUMINATOR

## Louisiana residents ask state to halt next phase of carbon capture project

BY: [WESLEY MULLER](#) - AUGUST 3, 2023 9:19 AM

GOOGLE MAPS: NOT INCLUDED IN ARTICLE



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Few Cypress trees remain in the wetlands and swamps near Lake Maurepas. (Photo by Wes Muller/LA Illuminator)

Southeast Louisiana residents say Lake Maurepas is one of the last remaining unspoiled waterways in the state, and they're begging state officials to stop chemical giant Air Products from building a series of wells and pipelines that will inject 5 million tons of carbon dioxide per year underneath the lake.

Several residents and elected officials traveled to Baton Rouge Wednesday evening for a Department of Natural Resources hearing on one of the initial phases of the project — the construction of a second test well that would allow the company to continue seismic testing of the geology below the lake. The agency is collecting public comments as it considers approval of Air Products' test well permit.

Air Products has plans for a \$4.5 billion hydrogen manufacturing complex in Ascension Parish that would use carbon capture technology to capture emissions and pipe the gas about a mile below the lakebed. The company already constructed its first test well earlier this year and performed seismic testing to map the geological formations under the lake.



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The residents who live near Lake Maurepas opposed the company disturbing what they call a beautiful waterscape with a fragile ecosystem that has supported local fisheries and restaurants for generations.

Rep. Bill Wheat, R-Ponchatoula, said he has rarely seen such a universal opinion shared by a wide spectrum of residents on a single issue.

“People are very concerned,” Wheat told the agency. “Lake Pontchartrain and the surrounding basin has already been affected by industry...Let’s look at some other alternatives...We’ve totally ignored those possibilities.”

Wheat introduced legislation this year in an effort to halt or at least slow down carbon capture projects in Lake Maurepas, but the bills failed against pushback from [over two dozen lobbyists](#) Air Products hired to shore up its dealings.

Kim Coates, a Tangipahoa Parish Council member, said the state is failing to consider the long term implications of its actions. It’s sacrificing a beautiful ecosystem and the livelihoods of fisherfolk and crab trappers for an international corporation that has promised a couple hundred jobs, she said.

“We need to save this natural resource,” she said. “It provides businesses. It provides part of the economy already, and we cannot lose that.”

The only voice in support of the project came from the company itself. Air Products executive Andrew Connolly touted the economics of the project, saying it will be the company’s largest investment in the country and will create 170 permanent jobs.

Connolly said the project will capture and store 95% of the plant’s carbon emissions.

It’s unclear how much infrastructure, such as platforms and injection wells, Air Products plans to eventually build in the lake.

Resident Joseph Cook said it took many years to restore the Lake Pontchartrain basin from the destruction wrought by oil and gas exploration. Lake Maurepas is connected to the west end of Lake Pontchartrain and is part of a shared ecosystem.

“Lake Maurepas is a very special part of our history and our culture,” Cook said. “It has taken years to restore, and it is extremely important that we not take any steps back in an effort to accommodate industry in exchange for our beautiful wetlands.”

John Albanese, a Tangipahoa Parish resident, invited state officials out on his boat to see what he said is damage already caused by Air Products’ initial test well operations.

Large work boats are stirring up silt, oxygen levels are dropping and massive algae blooms are killing fish and crabs, Albanese said. Crab trappers are sending him photos of crabs with strange growths on their shells, he said while displaying the photos on his phone.





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“I want to bring y’all out there and show you the devastation,” Albanese said. “The damage that’s being done to the lake already is unbelievable.”

In December, the state’s natural resources agency approved the first test well permit despite massive public opposition.

The Livingston Parish Council attempted to stop Air Products from moving forward its proposal to store carbon beneath the lake but [was ultimately overruled by a federal judge.](#)

Louisiana is tangling with massive amounts of air pollution caused by its petrochemical industry. Some have proposed carbon capture as a solution, though critics characterized the technology is new and untested on a large scale.

No companies are proposing to add carbon capture to abate existing emissions in Louisiana. The only proposals are to curb future emissions from plants that have yet to be built.

Nevertheless, carbon capture has powerful supporters. Gov. John Bel Edwards and the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry — an advocacy organization that often opposes the governor — are fully behind the industry’s plans for Louisiana.

“We’re losing our natural resource,” Albanese said. “Just one company is gonna take it from us...Please listen to us this time.”

Air Products has taken steps to address the public’s concern over the project with informational meetings and even a seismic test demonstration over the lake.

The public comment period with the Department of Natural Resource’s Office of Conservation ends at 4:30 p.m. Thursday

**Link to Article:**

**[Louisiana residents ask state to halt next phase of carbon capture project - Louisiana Illuminator \(lailluminator.com\)](#)**

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