

OPINION

Georgia Power buries lede with underground drilling

We are concerned regarding the exploratory drilling project by Georgia Power Company to assess the potential for underground carbon dioxide (CO₂) sequestration in the southeast corner of Wayne County.

The four test wells could potentially endanger the Floridan Aquifer, a major source of drinking water across Southeast Georgia. While the potential impacts are substantial, the public has received no advance information about the project.

Some consider underground CO₂ sequestration, also known as carbon injection, as a feasible means to reduce the excessive heat-trapping emissions accumulated in our atmosphere from more than a century of industrialization, although the full impacts of carbon injection remain poorly understood. Existing research on carbon injection warns of the possible damage

caused by the conversion of CO₂ to carbonic acid, which could erode materials contacted in underground storage and compromise aquifers. Similar destructive effects are known to occur in ocean ecosystems degraded by carbonic acid when they become saturated with dissolved CO₂.

Underlying this issue, Georgia policymakers have yet to responsibly acknowledge the full consequences of carbon emissions. Carbon sequestration would not be necessary had Georgia progressed beyond an obsolete commitment to fossil fuels demonstrated through the continued use of coal, oil and natural gas or if the state held industries accountable for their full environmental impacts. Carbon sequestration of this kind appears to serve primarily as a means to publicly launder the reputation of Georgia Power while increasing its profits. As a regulated monopoly, the company is guaranteed a return on every dollar spent on projects approved by the Public Service Commission, which has notoriously accommodated the company's agenda.

To sustain company profits, Georgia Power's residential energy customers are already overburdened by an increase of 35 percent in their monthly bills since January 2023, which is even more punishing during the year's hottest and most energy-intensive months. Rather than continuing to generate more carbon emissions through the use of fossil fuels, Georgia must transition to clean energy, eliminating the costly consequences of these pollutants as well as the unnecessary hazards and expense of sequestration.

Risks to Southeast Georgia's vital aquifer could be avoided if state policies prioritized public interests instead of rewarding Georgia Power's executives and stockholders. Unfortunately, in Georgia, business as usual promotes uncontrolled and underdeveloped technologies to greenwash unsustainable practices in the guise of progress.

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