

Standing Tall in Sopchoppy: Aquastore® Tank Is Built to Last

Deep in the Apalachicola National Forest in the Florida panhandle where U.S. 319 makes a crank-handle turn lies the community of Sopchoppy. It's an Indian name that means "dark water" or "twisted river." In fact, the Sopchoppy River is one of the most pristine in the whole state and it attracts a crowd for boating, kayaking and fishing.

Just 40 miles southwest of Tallahassee but a world away from the hustle and bustle, Sopchoppy is home to about 400 people who prefer the peaceful life and look forward to the annual Worm Grunting Festival, where worms are coaxed to the surface of the earth and harvested for bait.



Years ago the Carrabelle, Tallahassee and Georgia railroad rumbled through here but it shut down and was later replaced by a scenic trail. All that remains today is the old depot, built in 1891 and lovingly restored in recent years. In fact, Sopchoppy is one of few communities that boasts a school gymnasium on the National Register of Historic Places.

A good chunk of Wakulla County's utility needs are served by the City of Sopchoppy. Public Works Director Leonard Tartt figures about 10,000 individuals get their water from his district via 4,000 connections. The district pumps about 21 million gallons of water each month—sourced from seven wells fed by the The Floridan Aquifer, which lies deep below the state, replenished by rainwater filtering through hundreds of feet of sand and rock.

Not quite as old as the Floridan Aquifer but just as critical to the area's needs is the city's Aquastore glass-fused-to-steel storage tank. Built in 1985, the tank has withstood the test of time and the elements and looks and performs like new. Sopchoppy has four other tanks—all steel—and Tartt says they don't compare to the Aquastore when it comes to durability, appearance and the low cost of maintenance.

"The Aquastore tank has more than performed as advertised in every aspect," says Tartt. "By comparison, the steel tanks fade over time and need to be repainted and they need more repair than the Aquastore."

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection requires that tanks be inspected and pressure washed every five years, and Tartt says the only repairs made to the Aquastore are re-caulking some seams. During the same period the steel tanks have had to be sandblasted and repainted several times to ward off corrosion.

"At \$80 dollars a gallon the cost of paint really adds up," he says.

Aquastore tanks are built by CST—the world's largest provider of modular, factory coated bolted storage tanks for dry bulk and liquid applications for many markets. The Aquastore is made of glass and steel fused together at 1,500°. With its inert, inorganic coating the Aquastore withstands heat, cold and moisture and maintains its

luster compared to steel tanks which require painting and the Aquastore Tank is easier to clean and maintain than concrete tanks that are susceptible to corrosion of reinforcing steel, cracking and mildew.

“The Sopchoppy tank is among the first Aquastore water tanks our company built in Florida and it continues to make us proud,” says John Viale, Territory Manager at Florida Aquastore, CST Storage’s exclusive turnkey provider of Aquastore Tanks throughout Florida, southern counties in Georgia, the Caribbean, Central and South America. “It looks and performs like new and I know Leonard gets the most out of its 239,000 gallon capacity.”

In fact, during the warm months the district uses the tank almost to capacity day in and day out.

“I’ve never had problems with it even though in the peak of summer the turnover will be 225,000-230,000 gallons a day,” says Tartt. “Then we’ll throttle it back a bit during the winter.”

Compared to elevated tanks, erecting an Aquastore is a snap. The geodesic dome is hoisted into place while panels are assembled underneath. Jacks are used to lift the tank higher to make room for additional panels. No one has to leave the ground and the Aquastore can be installed in the tightest of spaces.

Tartt also prefers the Aquastore for its compatibility with other specialized systems. For example, the district installed an aerator inside the tank to filter the water and help remove hydrogen sulfide from the water and the sulfur smell that comes with it. Other elements like iron and calcium are easier to deal with because they’re easy to wash off the tank surface.

Leonard Tartt has lived in Wakulla County all his life. He served on Sopchoppy’s city council and was the mayor before taking over the public works role. He’s seen quite a bit in his time and has a good perspective on what’s built to last.

“Everybody looks at the bottom line nowadays, but I also look at quality and historical performance, what’s worked and what hasn’t,” says Tartt. You can get a fire hydrant that will pass codes but less costly but will it last 50 years? It’s basically the same thing. You have a little added cost with ground storage because you need service pumps. But when you consider the tradeoff the Aquastore comes out ahead every time.”

The CT&G Railroad may not have survived in these parts, but odds are good for the Aquastore tank, which is still performing at a superior level at age 31.

Quick Facts:

Dimensions: 42’ diameter x 23’ tall

Capacity: 239,000 gallons

Erected: 1984-85

Benefits of CST's Aquastore® glass-fused-to-steel tanks:

- Lowest maintenance requirements over tank life
 - Provides storage capacity for almost any system – up to 1.5 million gallons with overflow elevations up to 200-feet high
 - Greater lifetime value versus welded or concrete tanks
 - Fastest construction methods
 - Impermeable to liquids and vapors
 - Glass-fused-to-steel controls undercutting caused by corrosion
 - Extremely UV-resistant
 - Glass-fused-to-steel is twice as hard (6.0-7.0 Mohs) as any field-applied coating system
 - Bond rating 12.5 times stronger than any zinc-epoxy-urethane system
- Specific tank designs, options and accessories to meet customer needs
- Benefits of particular product can be listed here

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