



Environmental Groups Warn Against Fast-Tracking Federal Review of Line 5 Pipeline Project in Northern Wisconsin

Groups Urge U.S. Army Corps to Postpone Public Hearing Until Water Quality Risks Identified

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Madison, WI— Yesterday, ten Wisconsin environmental organizations sent [a letter](#) to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers calling on the agency to postpone the release of its draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and the public hearing on Enbridge Energy’s controversial proposal to construct a new segment of its Line 5 oil pipeline in northern Wisconsin.

The letter was submitted jointly by Midwest Environmental Advocates (MEA), Clean Wisconsin, Sierra Club Wisconsin, 350 Wisconsin, the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, Action for the Climate Emergency, River Alliance of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Conservation Voters, Wisconsin’s Green Fire, and the League of Women Voters of Ashland & Bayfield Counties.

These environmental organizations are urging the Army Corps—the agency tasked with reviewing Enbridge’s Clean Water Act permit application—to delay the draft Environmental Assessment and public hearing on the permit until the State of Wisconsin and the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa have a chance to provide input.

Under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, the Army Corps may not issue the permit unless the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Bad River Band certify that the pipeline project will comply with state and Tribal water quality standards, something that has not yet happened.

“We’re very concerned that the Army Corps seems to be pushing ahead in the absence of critical information about the potential harm to state and Tribal water quality,” said Midwest Environmental Advocates Attorney Anya Janssen. “The Army Corps can’t possibly determine

whether the project will have significant environmental impacts without first hearing from the DNR and the Bad River Band.”

In their letter, the organizations also reminded the Army Corps of its obligation under federal law to allow members of the public to review and comment on the agency’s findings.

“Holding the public hearing now, before the Army Corps has all the information it needs to fully assess the risks to our wetlands and waterways, is premature and unfairly deprives the public of a meaningful opportunity to participate in the process,” said Brett Korte, staff attorney with Clean Wisconsin.

Line 5 is a hazardous liquid pipeline that conveys light and synthetic crude oil and natural gas liquids from Superior, Wisconsin to Sarnia, Ontario through northern Wisconsin and both the Upper and Lower Peninsulas of Michigan. The construction project—which would stretch for more than 40 miles and cross nearly 200 waterbodies—would allow Enbridge to continue operating the 70-year-old pipeline in the Lake Superior and Lake Michigan watersheds.

For more than a decade, the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa has fought to remove the Line 5 oil pipeline from their homeland in northern Wisconsin. A federal judge recently ruled in their favor, agreeing that Enbridge is illegally trespassing on the Bad River Band’s reservation. Judge Conley’s shutdown order is currently on appeal before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

In the meantime, Enbridge is pressing ahead with its plan to reroute the pipeline around the reservation, keeping the oil and the profits flowing while putting the entire watershed and the people who depend on it in the path of a potentially devastating oil spill.

Elizabeth Ward of Sierra Club Wisconsin said, “Given the significant risks associated with pipeline construction and operation, fast-tracking the federal permitting process would be nothing short of reckless. We strongly urge the Army Corps to postpone the public hearing until they have all the necessary information.”

Britnie Remer of 350 Wisconsin said, “We know this pipeline could eviscerate local economies and generations of cultural practice for members of the Bad River Band. Rushing ahead without all of the necessary facts dismisses these very real threats. The Army Corps must complete a proper environmental review, and they must not hold a public hearing until this has been done.”

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