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Enbridge Pipeline Spills Oil in Clark County
Over 29,000 gallons of crude oil spill in to fields, conservation groups concerned
about proposed pipeline expansion

Madison – According to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, on Tuesday, Enbridge Energy, Inc. discovered that one of two existing pipelines along a right-of-way from Superior to Delavan ruptured, sending over 29,000 gallons of crude oil into the environment. The spill comes just two weeks after Midwest Environmental Advocates filed a lawsuit on behalf of the River Alliance of Wisconsin (RAW), the Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA) and the Friends of the St. Croix Headwaters (FOSCH), challenging the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource’s (DNR) decision approving another 321-mile Enbridge pipeline along the same right-of-way.

Tuesday’s spill is Enbridge’s eighth spill in Wisconsin since 1999. The pipeline right-of-way crosses 242 rivers and 68 miles of wetlands between Superior and Delavan, Wisconsin. The proposed expansion will send an additional 400,000 barrels of crude oil per day through the heart of Wisconsin and down to Illinois. In their suit, the groups claim that DNR failed to adequately address the risk of pipeline corrosion and rupture as well as the impact that new construction will have on pristine wetlands and riverways across Wisconsin.

“Enbridge’s track record raises serious concerns,” says Brent Denzin, attorney for Midwest Environmental Advocates, Inc. “Tuesday’s spill highlights the need to study the threat posed by additional Enbridge pipelines before we remove wetlands and grade riverbanks to construct them.”

“What happens if we double the amount of oil running under our trout streams and wetlands?” says Lori Grant, Water Policy Director for the River Alliance of Wisconsin. “We want to know what type of threat we are dealing with in the future.”

FAST FACTS

- In addition to the eight Wisconsin spills, Enbridge pipelines are responsible for spilling over 252,000 gallons in Minnesota in 2002, and more than 3.3 million gallons of crude oil into the Canadian environment since 1990.
- Enbridge has proposed to ultimately construct a pipeline from Superior to refineries in Illinois, requiring a new right of way through southern Wisconsin and large stretches of Illinois. <http://www.enbridge-expansion.com/expansion/main.aspx?id=1214&tmi=288&tmt=4>
- The proposed expansion will require the dredging of 361 acres of wetlands and proposes clear-cutting of trees and vegetation in some 900 additional acres, including 262 acres of high-quality wooded wetlands.
- Of the 18 Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters, five received formal designation just last month. These five rivers are the Amnicon, Upper St. Croix, Totogatic, Thornapple and Flambeau.
- Under Wisconsin law, an Environmental Impact Statement is required if impacts to the environment are potentially significant. An EIS must include a detailed assessment of impacts and proposed mitigation, a public hearing, and extended comment by the public and surrounding agencies. DNR declined to conduct an EIS for the proposed 321-mile expansion.
- Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection, restoration and enjoyment of wetlands and associated ecosystems through science-based programs, education and advocacy.
- The River Alliance of Wisconsin is a non-profit, non-partisan group of citizens, organizations, and businesses dedicated to advocating for the protection, enhancement and restoration of our rivers and watersheds.
- Friends of the St. Croix Headwaters (FOSCH) is a non-profit watershed organization dedicated to protecting the St. Croix River and its pristine headwaters.
- Midwest Environmental Advocates, Inc. (MEA) is a non-profit environmental law office committed to protecting the public's right to clean air, clean water, clean government, and responsible land use.