

THE FACTS ABOUT LINE 5:

How We Can Protect the Great Lakes from an Oil Spill

January 2024



We are united by our love of the Great Lakes - the largest, most valuable fresh surface water system in the world. The lakes provide drinking water for millions of people in the United States and Canada, drive our economy, and define our way of life. But the Great Lakes are being threatened by Enbridge's aging, vulnerable Line 5 pipeline, which sits in the open waters of the Straits of Mackinac.

BACKGROUND



FLOW is a founding member of the **Oil & Water Don't Mix** campaign, a diverse coalition formed to prevent a catastrophic oil spill from Line 5 in the Great Lakes.

Line 5 is owned and operated by Enbridge, the same Canadian corporation responsible for the 2010 spill of more than **1.2 million gallons of heavy tar sands oil** into the Kalamazoo River watershed near Marshall, Michigan.

That spill remains **one of the largest inland oil spills in U.S. history**. It took four years and over **\$1.2 billion** to clean it up to the limited extent possible.

THE GOOD NEWS



On June 16, 2023, Wisconsin federal Judge William Conley issued a court order to shut down Line 5 in three years. In a victory for tribal sovereignty, the court also found that Line 5 is trespassing on land belonging to the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa.

THE BAD NEWS



On December 1, 2023, the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) approved Enbridge's application to relocate Line 5 to a proposed tunnel under the Straits, and dismissed feasible alternatives. **FLOW contends that this was a violation of the Michigan Environmental Protection Act (MEPA) and is appealing the decision.** The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has yet to approve the tunnel, and a decision isn't expected until 2026. Meanwhile, 23 million gallons of fossil fuels run through the open waters of the Straits every day.

OUTDATED, DECAYING, VULNERABLE



Every day, Line 5 carries nearly 23 million gallons of oil and natural gas liquids (NGLs) from the oil sands fields in western Canada to refineries in Ontario, using the **Straits of Mackinac as a high-risk shortcut.**

Built in 1953 and designed to last 50 years, Line 5 is **70 years old** and operates in fierce currents on the bottom lands of the Straits - which are held in the public trust.

Ship anchors and other objects have **repeatedly dented and gouged Line 5**, and its protective coating has been **damaged in numerous spots.**



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TRACK RECORD OF FAILURE

Line 5 crosses hundreds of rivers, streams, and wetlands. Outside the Straits, Line 5 has failed at least **33 times** since 1968, spilling more than **1.1 million gallons** of oil in Michigan and Wisconsin.

An oil spill in the Straits could pollute vast reaches of open water and **720 miles** of shoreline along Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, according to the University of Michigan. Scientists at Michigan Technological University have characterized the Deepwater Horizon and Exxon Valdez disasters as “useful analogies for [the] ecological impacts” of a Line 5 rupture in the Straits.



ECONOMIC DISASTER

A Line 5 oil spill in the Straits of Mackinac could strike a **\$6 billion blow** to Michigan’s economy, communities, and natural resources, and have an **additional \$45 billion dollar impact** to the region’s commercial shipping and steel production, according to studies commissioned by FLOW and conducted by Michigan State University experts.



THE RISKY TUNNEL PROPOSAL

Enbridge proposes to bore and blast a **21-foot diameter tunnel** under the Straits of Mackinac to house a new Line 5 pipeline, whose fossil fuel contents, when burned, would release climate pollution each year equivalent to **nearly seven new coal-fired power plants**.

Engineering and geologic experts warn the proposed tunnel is a dangerous and untested design, particularly for NGLs, which pose a **catastrophic explosion risk**. Moreover, Enbridge’s own depreciation study filed with FERC in 2021 shows that **Line 5 will be a stranded asset by 2040**.

ACHIEVING ENERGY SECURITY AND MEETING CLIMATE GOALS



According to Enbridge’s own experts and others, **we can meet the energy needs** of the Great Lakes region and **remove the threat to our waters** by making smart adjustments to the existing North American pipeline system.



Enbridge’s own experts testified that Michigan gas prices would rise **only half a penny** if Line 5 is shut down. In October 2023, PLG Consulting released an important new report showing that energy markets will adapt, without price spikes or shortages. **Read the report at <https://forloveofwater.org/PLG>.**



To achieve **net-zero emissions by 2050**, the International Energy Agency’s road map report concludes that **no new investments in fossil fuel infrastructure can occur**. This takes Enbridge’s proposals to build a Great Lakes tunnel **off the table**.

TAKE ACTION ON LINE 5

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LINE 5 IN THE COURTS

In order to protect the Great Lakes and our public trust rights to use and enjoy them, **Governor Gretchen Whitmer ordered Enbridge to shut down Line 5 by May 2021.** The State of Michigan and Attorney General Dana Nessel remain committed to this legal course while **Enbridge defies the shutdown order**, leaving Line 5 exposed to exceptionally strong currents, lakebed scouring, anchor and cable strikes, and corrosion.

While Enbridge defies the State's shutdown order, **Line 5 remains a clear and present danger.** The 2019 AG case is currently in limbo in the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, where the court will decide whether the case will remain in state court (where it was originally filed) or move to federal court.

Join FLOW today as we and our allies support the State of Michigan's and tribes' shutdown efforts, and **build the movement to stop an oil spill disaster in the heart of the Great Lakes.**

Alternatives exist for supplying oil and propane, but there is no alternative to the Great Lakes!

Individuals, families, organizations, communities, governments, tribes, businesses, and faith leaders are **working together to shut down Line 5 before it's too late.**



Scan code to download this fact sheet and visit our library of Line 5 resources.

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO:



LINE 5 CITIZEN ACTION TOOLKIT

Visit ForLoveOfWater.org/toolkit to contact your representatives, sign up to volunteer, and find other ways you can act.



GET THE FACTS

Visit ForLoveOfWater.org/Line5 for articles, reports, videos, and webinars.



SPEAK UP

Enbridge may have a huge advertising budget, but a **chorus of voices will be heard!** Write a letter to the editor, email your lawmakers, sign petitions, and display a yard sign.



SPREAD THE WORD

Print and share this fact sheet and other reports and handouts from our website.



SHOW UP AND STAND UP

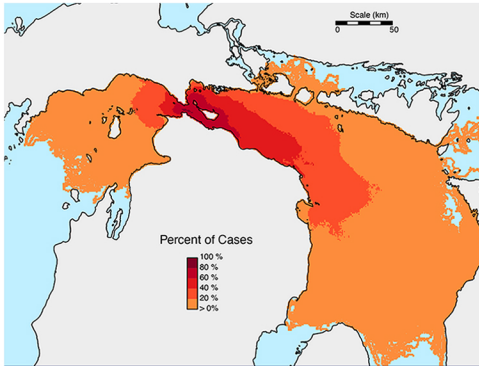
Attend hearings about the proposed oil tunnel with the Michigan Public Service Commission and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers -- those sessions must allow public comment.



SUPPORT FLOW

Visit ForLoveOfWater.org/donate to help us continue making the case to shut down Line 5.

FACT: UPWARDS OF 90% OF THE OIL CARRIED BY LINE 5 GOES FROM CANADIAN OIL FIELDS ► TO CANADIAN REFINERIES.



Probability (percent of cases) in which oil is present at any time after initial release. SOURCE: Graham Sustainability Institute, University of Michigan.

More than 15% of Lake Michigan's open water (3,528 square miles) and nearly 60% of Lake Huron's open water (13,611 square miles) could be affected by visible oil from a spill in the Straits. SOURCE: Graham Sustainability Institute, University of Michigan.



Oil & Water Don't Mix - a diverse, dedicated coalition of grassroots groups, tribes, NGOs, and non-profit organizations opposes Line 5 and the oil tunnel proposal. Together we've held protests at the Mackinac Straits and at other pipeline sites, spoken at public meetings, and joined the legal fight to get oil out of the Great Lakes.



Enbridge's twin Line 5 pipelines lie exposed at the bottom of the Straits of Mackinac - a busy shipping channel and sensitive ecological zone with turbulent currents. Underwater inspectors have documented gouges and damage to the protective coating. Another anchor strike like the one that occurred in 2018 could be catastrophic.



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FLOW is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization based in Traverse City, Michigan. Our mission is to ensure that the waters of the Great Lakes Basin are healthy, public, and protected for all.

**The Great Lakes belong to all of us.
They are ours to defend.**