



**Oil & Water Don't Mix**  
Keep Oil Out of the Great Lakes

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## **Straits Oil Spill Threat Shadows Mackinac Island Policy Conference** *Business and political leaders call for action to prevent looming disaster*

The fresh drinking water and whitefish, passenger ferry service, and Pure Michigan economy that await next week's attendees of the annual Mackinac Policy Conference all could be wiped out by a sea of oil if state policymakers fail to act urgently to stop the oil flowing through a pair of rusty old pipelines in the Mackinac Straits, said business, political, and scientific leaders in a statewide teleconference today.

As powerbrokers gather on Mackinac Island to debate Michigan's most vital issues, they must tackle the growing threat from the Enbridge "Line 5" oil pipelines to the Great Lakes and to local businesses and communities – including Mackinac Island, St. Ignace, Charlevoix, and Alpena – that would wither if an oil spill tainted their Great Lakes drinking water supply and source of tourism and jobs.

"Enbridge needs to act now and realize Line 5 is a ticking time bomb that needs to be shut down immediately," said **Chris Shepler, president of Shepler's Mackinac Island Ferry**, chairman of the Mackinaw City Downtown Development Authority, and vice president of the St. Ignace Visitor's Bureau. "If there's a Great Lakes oil spill, it would be game over for my family's ferry business after 71 years of continuous service, and economic shock would overtake the entire region for years to come."

The city of Mackinac Island and [40 other communities](#) in northern Michigan and across the state have passed resolutions calling on Gov. Rick Snyder and Attorney General Bill Schuette to stop Line 5's oil flow while a state advisory board studies alternatives that don't threaten the Great Lakes. Seven tribes and hundreds of businesses and organizations also [support](#) that call. And a recent poll found that 66 percent of Michigan residents believe Enbridge should not transport oil under the Straits of Mackinac.

If the pipeline were to leak oil into the Straits of Mackinac, the effects on Mackinac Island would be disastrous, the Mackinac Island City Council said in its resolution. These impacts include to the island's drinking water supply.

"We get our drinking water directly from Lake Huron, and our water plant cannot filter out oil. If there were an oil spill, our water supply would be cut off for as long as there is oil in the water," said Allen Burt, water plant manager for Mackinac Island. He added that the water stored in the island's reservoirs would provide only one day's supply during peak summer tourist season.

Research released this spring by the University of Michigan shows that the threat from Line 5 is grave, with up to 700 miles of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron shoreline stretching from the Grand Traverse region to Saginaw Bay potentially vulnerable to an oil spill in the Straits.

"Our computer modeling shows that more than 15 percent of Lake Michigan's open water and nearly 60 percent of Lake Huron's open water is vulnerable to pollution by visible oil from a spill in the Mackinac

Straits,” said **Dr. David Schwab, a world-renowned research scientist at the University of Michigan’s Water Center in Ann Arbor**. “The water flow in the Straits can be more powerful than flow at Niagara Falls and because it changes direction every few days it could quickly whip an oil spill into a widespread environmental disaster.”

In bipartisan efforts, **State Sen. Rick Jones** (R-Grand Ledge) and **State Rep. Jeff Irwin** (D-Ann Arbor) both have introduced legislation to shut down Line 5 in the Straits, citing the unacceptable economic and environmental risk, while **U.S. Sens. Gary Peters and Debbie Stabenow**, and **U.S. Rep. Candice Miller** (R-Harrison Township), have introduced bills seeking to protect the Great Lakes from Line 5’s threat.

“Michigan residents cannot drink Canadian oil, and Michigan’s economy could crash if Enbridge turns the Great Lakes black.” said **Jones**, noting that one in five Michigan jobs – more than 700,000 jobs in all – is tied to having high quality and plentiful water, according to the state Office of the Great Lakes, including shipping, advanced manufacturing, agriculture, fishing, and more than 80 other water-using industry subsectors.

“The Straits of Mackinac is the worst place in the Great Lakes for an accident,” **Irwin** said. “The complicated and unpredictable currents of the Straits expose miles of Pure Michigan coastline to a spill that cannot feasibly be contained. That’s why Michigan needs to help Enbridge reroute this oil and shut down this pipeline as soon as possible.” **Irwin** added that Enbridge’s 2010 spill of a million gallons of tar sands oil in the Kalamazoo River watershed took four years and more than \$1.2 billion to clean up to the extent possible.

The Oil & Water Don’t Mix campaign on April 13 sent a [letter](#) to Gov. Snyder, Attorney General Schuette, and other state officials detailing eight known violations of Enbridge’s easement agreement allowing the company conditional use of state waters and bottomlands. Among the violations, Enbridge has failed to meet pipeline wall thickness requirements, concealed information about cracks and dents in the pipeline, and failed to demonstrate it has adequate liability insurance.

“Enbridge has broken its contract with the people of Michigan and is operating Line 5 illegally,” said **Kate Madigan, a policy specialist at the Michigan Environmental Council and spokesperson for the Oil & Water Don’t Mix campaign**. “It’s time for the state to enforce our laws and protect something we cannot live without – the Great Lakes.”

To learn more, see the Backgrounder below and visit [www.OilandWaterDontMix.org](http://www.OilandWaterDontMix.org).

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#### **Additional Contacts Available to Media:**

Liz Kirkwood, Exec. Director, FLOW. 231-944-1568. [liz@flowforwater.org](mailto:liz@flowforwater.org) - Enbridge easement violations and alternatives to Line 5.

Mike Shriberg, Great Lakes Exec. Director, National Wildlife Federation. 734-887-7107. [shribergm@nwf.org](mailto:shribergm@nwf.org) - Polling data and NWF lawsuits.



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#### **Backgrounder on Enbridge’s Line 5 pipeline**

With business and government leaders set to gather just a stone’s throw from Enbridge’s Line 5 pipeline, the upcoming Mackinac Policy Conference is an important opportunity for meaningful discussion on how to protect the Great Lakes from a catastrophic oil spill.

Oil & Water Don't Mix Campaign 148 E Front Street, Suite 301, Traverse City, MI 49684. 231-480-4112. [www.OilandWaterDontMix.org](http://www.OilandWaterDontMix.org)

Several recent developments have underscored the risk posed by Line 5 in the Straits of Mackinac, deepened concerns about Enbridge's ability to prevent or respond to a spill and demonstrated that the pipeline is operating in violation of state and federal law.

This backgrounder presents the latest information about Line 5 and directs journalists to helpful resources and contacts for their reporting on this urgent Great Lakes issue. More information is available at [www.oilandwaterdontmix.org](http://www.oilandwaterdontmix.org).

### **The facts on Line 5**

- Built in 1953.
- Owned and operated by Enbridge, the company responsible for the 2010 Kalamazoo River oil spill—the largest inland oil spill in U.S. history.
- 645-mile pipeline carries oil from Superior, Wis., to Sarnia, Ontario.
- Two, twenty-inch-diameter pipelines carry up to 23 million gallons of oil a day through the Straits of Mackinac.
- 15 known leaks on Line 5 since 1988.
- To date, 42 local governments and 9 tribal governments have passed resolutions urging state leaders to take greater action on Line 5.
- To date, 180 businesses have signed on in support of shutting down Line 5.
- May 26 marks 317 days since Attorney General Bill Schuette said publicly that the pipeline's "days are numbered."

### **Recent developments**

- **May 17** – U.S. Sens. Gary Peters and Debbie Stabenow call on the U.S. Department of Transportation to reclassify pipelines under the Great Lakes, such as the Straits of Mackinac section of Line 5, as offshore facilities, which would lift the cap on Enbridge's liability in the case of an oil spill. <http://bit.ly/Raiseliability>
- **May 16** – The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) sues the federal agency responsible for overseeing pipelines and asks court to halt the transport of oil through Line 5 until the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) complies with federal law. NWF asserts that PHMSA failed to assess impacts on the environment and on threatened or endangered species, as required by federal law, during its 2013 approval of Enbridge's emergency spill response plan. <http://bit.ly/NWFlawsuit>
- **May 13** – Enbridge estimates cleaning up a spill at the Straits of Mackinac would cost \$1 billion. <http://bit.ly/MLivecleanup>
- **May 10** – A Detroit Free Press story reveals that contaminated soil remained for three decades after Line 5 leaked in the Upper Peninsula's Hiawatha National Forest. The incident raises questions about whether the amount of oil spilled matched the amount Enbridge reported, and led U.S. Forest Service officials to "question Enbridge's delayed reaction to discovering and cleaning up the Hiawatha contamination, as well as the delay in informing forest officials," the Free Press reported. <http://bit.ly/FreeUPoilspill>
- **May 9** – NWF releases EPIC-MRA polling showing that 63 percent of Michigan residents think companies should not be allowed to operate pipelines under the Great Lakes, and 66 percent believe Enbridge should not transport oil under the Straits of Mackinac. <http://bit.ly/NWFpolling>
- **April 27** – U.S. Rep. Candice Miller introduces legislation requiring the federal government to shut down Line 5 if a comprehensive study shows the pipeline poses a risk. The bill from Miller, a Republican, shows bipartisan congressional support for action on Line 5; Sens. Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters introduced related legislation last year. <http://bit.ly/Millerbill>

- **April 13** – Led by FLOW (For Love of Water), 22 environmental and tribal groups send a letter to Gov. Rick Snyder, Attorney General Bill Schuette and other state officials detailing eight known violations of Enbridge’s easement agreement with the State of Michigan. Among the violations, Enbridge has failed to meet pipeline wall thickness requirements, concealed information about cracks and dents in the pipeline and failed to demonstrate it has adequate liability insurance. Enbridge has therefore broken its contract with the people of Michigan and is operating illegally. <http://bit.ly/easementviolations>
- **April 12** – State Sen. Rick Jones, R-Grand Ledge, introduces a bill with bipartisan support that aims to shut down Line 5 in the Straits of Mackinac. Senate Bill 880 would block future construction of oil pipelines through the Great Lakes and require an independent risk analysis for existing pipelines. If risks were found to be high, the pipeline would be immediately shut down. <http://bit.ly/jonesbill>
- **March 31** – Computer modeling by the University of Michigan shows that more than 700 miles of Lake Huron and Lake Michigan coastline could be impacted by an oil spill from Line 5 in the Straits of Mackinac. (<http://bit.ly/UMspillstudy>.) The modeling results followed comments from the U.S. Coast Guard and an Enbridge spill-response contractor that, should a spill occur there, cleanup operations would halt at night and on days with significant waves (<http://bit.ly/cleanuplimits>) and would likely only recover 30 percent of the spilled oil (<http://bit.ly/30percentcleanup>).

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