



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

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Business Owners and Great Lakes Groups: Governor Snyder Must Immediately Open Hearing on Straits of Mackinac Oil Pipelines

Representatives of dozens of environmental groups, businesses, and governments – and thousands of citizens – today called on Governor Snyder to take swift and meaningful action to protect the Great Lakes from a catastrophic oil spill from a pair of 61-year-old Enbridge pipelines in the Straits of Mackinac.

The Oil & Water Don't Mix campaign contends that Michigan is long overdue in applying state law – specifically, the Great Lakes Submerged Lands Act – to the aging “Line 5” pipelines. The law requires the state to conduct an open public process to evaluate the likely risks and impacts to not only the Great Lakes waters and ecosystem, but also the affected communities, in the event of an oil spill. This public process, in turn, would address the question of whether the Enbridge oil pipelines in the Straits warrant greater regulation, repair, replacement, or removal.

Members of the Oil and Water Don't Mix campaign in July sent the governor a [letter](#) formally requesting he immediately open a transparent, public proceeding to evaluate the threat the pipelines pose and determine what actions should be taken to prevent a catastrophe. Mayor Margaret Doud of Mackinac Island last month sent the governor a similar letter.

"A leak in the pipeline under the Straits of Mackinac would be a major disaster for all of us who live within the reach of the Great Lakes. The water supply on Mackinac Island would be shut down and the economic vitality of the Island would be seriously damaged. Island residents would have to be evacuated," said **George Goodman, member of the Board of Trustees of the Mackinac Island Community Foundation and a Mackinac Island resident**. "The Governor must take immediate steps to reassure the citizens of Michigan that Enbridge is operating in full compliance of the State's 1953 easement."

To date, Gov. Snyder has created a pipeline safety task force—which meets behind closed doors—but has not initiated the open review such a significant threat to the Great Lakes requires. The pipelines push almost 23 million gallons of oil a day through the Straits.

Computer simulations this summer by the University of Michigan and the National Wildlife Federation [showed](#) that strong, erratic currents make the Straits of Mackinac “the worst possible place for an oil spill in the Great Lakes,” according to U-M researcher David Schwab. A possible million-gallon oil spill there would foul shorelines from Wilderness State Park in Lake Michigan to Rogers City in Lake Huron, including tourist hotspots like Mackinac Island and Beaver Island.

“As someone who looks at this issue from a twofold perspective--Northern Michigan-born and raised, and owner of a third generation family business that relies solely on the Straits of Mackinac for its income--three words come to mind: ‘Water is life,’ said **Chris Shepler, owner and operator of Shepler's Mackinac Island Ferry**, which has been providing passenger transport to Mackinac

Island since 1945. I only hope that we, as a state, take a strong look at what Enbridge is currently doing and wants to do under the Straits of Mackinac.”

Aaron Payment, Tribal Chairman of the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians, added, “As natural stewards of the land and with both a sacred responsibility over the water and shared legal authority over our Great Lakes Fisheries, American Indians in Michigan are extremely concerned with the imminent threat of a spill of a million gallons of oil.”

While the federal government oversees pipeline safety, legal experts say Gov. Snyder has the authority and duty—provided by the public trust doctrine, the Great Lakes Submerged Lands Act and Enbridge’s 1953 easement with the state—to protect the Great Lakes by ensuring the company is doing all it can to prevent a spill in the Straits.

“Governor Snyder must act as a state trustee under this law. Instead, he continues to say publicly that it is up to the federal government to make sure that the pipelines are safe,” said **Liz Kirkwood, an attorney and executive director of FLOW**, a Traverse City-based Great Lakes public policy group. “On the contrary, the Enbridge oil pipelines in the Straits are very much a state issue. Without obtaining an easement from the State of Michigan in 1953, Enbridge simply could not have built nor continue to operate these pipelines in state-owned waters. That is why the state retains primary authority over these oil pipelines.”

The Oil & Water Don’t Mix campaign continues to gain support from Michigan businesses and communities, and already is backed by more than 2,400 individuals who have signed a letter urging Gov. Snyder to take charge and prevent a catastrophic oil spill in the Great Lakes.

“People are shocked when they first learn about the Enbridge oil pipelines lurking at the bottom of the Straits,” said **Jim Lively, Program Director at the Michigan Land Use Institute**. “Many people wonder whether oil pipelines should have ever been allowed in the Great Lakes in the first place. It’s time to get some answers to the public’s questions and determine the fate of these pipelines.”

Video:

- Underwater footage of the oil pipeline and a TV spot available at <http://bit.ly/owdm-video>.
- University of Michigan simulation of a Straits oil spill available at <http://bit.ly/1r6smWb>

For More Information:

To obtain more information, including the Oil & Water Don’t Mix campaign fact sheet, “Challenging Enbridge’s ‘Line 5’ Oil Pipelines in the Straits of Mackinac,” visit www.OilandWaterDontMix.org.

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