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Jefferson County Board Passes Resolution to Demand Full Environmental Assessment Prior to Enbridge Line 61 Tar Sands Expansion

Jefferson: The Jefferson County Board passed a resolution 27-2 on Tuesday urging the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to reject the air permit for the proposed tar sands pipeline expansion and undertake a full environmental assessment first.

“As Supervisors, we were just doing our job last night. Jefferson County residents recognized a threat to their environment, their resources, and their quality of life and stepped up and asked us to protect them. There was no doubt how we should proceed. We were just doing our job ensuring these residents have a voice in the process,” said Walter Christensen, the Supervisor who introduced the resolution.

Enbridge Energy has proposed a massive expansion of its Line 61 tar sands pipeline that travels through Wisconsin from Superior to Flanagan Illinois, from 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) to eventually 1.2 million bpd—an almost unprecedented amount. Enbridge has a dismal safety record, with approximately 800 pipeline-related incidents since 1999. Most notoriously, Enbridge is known for the largest tar sands oil spill in history, when a pipeline ruptured and spilled 840,000 gallons of tar sands oil into a wetland that leaked into the Kalamazoo River during a planned shutdown in 2010. Four years later, the spill has still not been successfully cleaned up, despite an expenditure of over \$1 billion; the Environmental Protection Agency recently ordered the river be dredged again. This spill resulted from a failure in a pipe with a flow-rate one-sixth of the Line 61 proposal that runs through Jefferson County. “Tar sands oil is very different from traditional ‘light’ oil, making the potential for a spill and the concerns worse,” explained Elizabeth Ward, Conservation Programs Coordinator for the Sierra Club-John Muir Chapter, “tar sands oil is incredibly dense, so if there is a contamination in a waterway, it does not float, making clean-up much more difficult. Additionally, it must be mixed with a caustic chemical compound to move it through pipelines, increasing the likelihood of a rupture.”

The only public hearing held regarding the proposed expansion was last Monday (May 5) in Superior. “This pipeline and its expansion jeopardize Lake Superior, other lakes, rivers, and waterways along the route. The potential problems with this expansion could present more risk than Wisconsin citizens are willing to bear for tar sands oil. We hope the DNR listens to the request for a full study and more hearings so they can determine whether we’re willing to accept that risk,” concluded Ward.

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Founded in 1892 by John Muir, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization. The Sierra Club’s mission is to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the earth’s ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out those objectives. The

Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter is made up of 15,000 members and supporters working to promote clean energy and protect water resources in Wisconsin.

Madison 350 is the local branch of 350.org, an international grassroots organization that is mobilizing a global climate movement. 350 parts per million (ppm) of CO₂ is the number that leading scientists say is the safe upper limit for carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. To get there, we need a different kind of ppm - a "people powered movement."