

Press Release
September 2, 2014

Tar Sands Activists Greet President Obama at Laborfest

MILWAUKEE, Wis.-- As President Obama spoke in Milwaukee for this year's Laborfest celebration, local environmental activists were there to remind him that labor interests and environmental protection go hand in hand, and to urge him to protect the Midwest from the invasion of dirty, toxic tar sands by foreign tar sands giant Enbridge.

The State Department recently approved Enbridge's scheme to bypass the federal review process and dramatically increase the amount of tar sands crude that will flow through the Midwest on their Alberta Clipper tar sands pipeline. Allowing this project to move forward without a full environmental review is a betrayal of the people who rely on clean air and water in the Great Lakes region for their health and livelihoods, as well as to President Obama's commitment to taking meaningful action on climate and a clean energy future.

"Being in Milwaukee and on the shores of Lake Michigan, we understand the importance of the Great Lakes to our health, economy, and way of life," said Amy Sies, local event organizer. Enbridge's pipeline expansion scheme will increase tar sands pipelines that feed from Superior, WI. Line 61 travels through the heart of Wisconsin from Superior to Flanagan, Illinois. Line 5 travels through northern Wisconsin to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and through the Straits of the Mackinaw, where Lake Huron and Lake Michigan meet. "We showed up today to call on President Obama to protect our clean water and reverse the State Department's decision."

"President Obama made it clear with the Keystone XL Pipeline that he will not permit tar sands pipelines if they have a negative impact on climate change," explained Mary Beth Elliott, a Madison 350 member who traveled to Milwaukee to greet President Obama, "we're expecting him to use the same standards for the pipelines in Wisconsin and reverse this decision."

Activists walked to the grounds handing out literature to crowd attendees and then watched the President's speech. "Enbridge's flood of tar sands oil through Wisconsin, likely headed to the Gulf Coast, put our most important waterways, including Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, and the Wisconsin River at risk. The Kalamazoo tar sands spill is still not cleaned up 4 years later. A similar spill in Lake Superior or in the Straits of the Mackinaw could be permanently devastating," stated Elizabeth Ward, Conservation Programs Coordinator at the Sierra Club-John Muir Chapter. "The least President Obama can do is require a full environmental review before permitting these pipelines."

