



The facts about Line 5.

How we can protect the Great Lakes from an oil spill.

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 threatened by Enbridge's aging, vulnerable Line 5 pipeline, which sits in the open waters of the Straits of Mackinac.

Outdated, decaying and vulnerable.

Flow Water Advocates is a founding member of the Oil & Water Don't Mix campaign, a diverse coalition working 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 **worst 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.

Every day, Line 5 carries nearly 23 million gallons of crude oil and natural gas liquids (NGLs) from western Canada, the majority of which supply refineries in Ontario and Quebec. Built in 1953 and designed to last 50 years, **Line 5 is now over 70 years old** and operates in the fierce currents of the Straits — which are held by the state in public trust. Ship anchors and other objects have repeatedly dented and gouged Line 5, and its protective coating has been damaged in numerous spots.

The path of Line 5.

Enbridge Line 5 is a 645-mile pipeline that originates in Superior, WI, crosses Michigan's Upper and Lower Peninsulas, including the open waters of the Straits of Mackinac, and terminates in Sarnia, Ontario. Line 5 is part of Enbridge's vast North American pipeline network connecting Alberta, Canada, to the Great Lakes & Atlantic regions.



Get our **Line 5
Citizen Action
Toolkit**

645 miles

Line 5 runs 645 miles across Michigan and Wisconsin.

23 million

gallons of oil and natural gas liquids are pumped through Line 5 every day.

84%

of North America's fresh surface water is found in the Great Lakes Basin.





Line 5 crosses more than 400 rivers, streams, and wetlands. Line 5 has failed at least 34 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.

How bad would a Line 5 rupture be?

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. The spills caused the death of marine mammals, seabirds, and other wildlife. They also caused significant damage to fisheries, tourism, and other local industries, with lingering oil contamination impacting the areas years and even decades later.

The economic impact.

A Line 5 oil spill in the Straits of Mackinac could strike a **\$7.68 billion** blow to Michigan’s economy, communities, and natural resources, and have an additional **\$59.8 billion** impact to the region’s commercial shipping and steel production, according to studies commissioned by Flow and conducted by Michigan State University experts.

The more than 70-year-old pipeline runs beneath the Mackinac Straits. It transports 23 million gallons of natural gas liquids and crude oil every day.
Photo Credit: Oil & Water Don't Mix



The 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 equivalent to nearly seven new coal-fired power plants, every year. Engineering

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



Achieving energy security and meeting climate goals.

1. 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 and using **excess available capacity in existing pipelines** that don't go through the Great Lakes.
2. Enbridge's own experts testified that Michigan **gas prices would increase only half a penny** if Line 5 is shut down, well within normal market fluctuations. In October 2023, PLG Consulting released an important report showing that energy markets will adapt, without price spikes or shortages. Read the report at <https://FlowWaterAdvocates.org/PLG>.
3. To achieve **net-zero emissions by 2050** and **prevent runaway climate change**, the International Energy Agency's road map report concludes that no new investments in fossil fuel infrastructure can occur. This takes Enbridge's proposal to build a new fossil fuels tunnel **off the table**.

Line 5 in the courts.

TOP: Carrie La Seur, Legal Director of Flow Water Advocates, makes a statement following oral arguments to the Michigan Court of Appeals. **Photo credit:** Michigan Advance.

BOTTOM: Whitney Gravelle, President of the Bay Mills Indian Community, walks along the shores of Lake Michigan. **Photo credit:** Sarah Rice for Earthjustice.

To protect the Great Lakes and our public trust rights to use and enjoy them, Governor Gretchen Whitmer sued and 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**, and Line 5 continues to be exposed to exceptionally strong currents, lakebed scouring, anchor and cable strikes, and corrosion.

Line 5 remains a clear and present danger while Michigan continues to fight for its **sovereign right to protect the public waters** of the Great Lakes and have a say in whether a foreign company can operate a pipeline across its territory. In Michigan, after years of litigation, the Sixth Circuit returned the Attorney General's 2019 case against Enbridge to state court because **Enbridge missed a statutory deadline** to transfer the case to federal court; however, in June 2025, the U.S. Supreme Court decided to review the Sixth Circuit's decision as part of its fall docket. Meanwhile, the Sixth Circuit denied the State of Michigan sovereign immunity, thereby dragging the state into a parallel federal case brought by Enbridge in 2020.

In Wisconsin, the 2019 Bad River Band's



case against Enbridge was appealed to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, which held oral arguments in February 2024. No final decision has yet been made. For more in-depth coverage on Line 5 litigation, visit our website: **FlowWaterAdvocates.org/Line5**.



Learn more about Flow's work on Line 5.



Line 5 tunnel permit process.

1. **Army Corps Environmental Impact Statement (EIS):** Under President Trump's energy emergency declaration, the Army Corps is fast-tracking the **federal permit** for Enbridge's proposed tunnel. Flow submitted public comments on the draft EIS in June 2025, noting grave legal and technical deficiencies in the Army Corps' analyses. The final EIS is expected in fall 2025.
2. **EGLE Permits:** Enbridge must also secure **state permits** for wetlands destruction and tunneling under state-owned lake bottomlands, which are protected under public trust law. A public comment period is expected in 2025.
3. **MPSC Tunnel Permit Case:** In December 2023, the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) approved Enbridge's application to relocate Line 5 to a proposed tunnel under the Straits, and disregarded feasible alternatives. In February 2025, the Michigan Court of Appeals affirmed the MPSC's permit approval. The Michigan Supreme Court will now decide whether to accept the appeal of that ruling or uphold the MPSC permit.
4. **Line 5 Wisconsin 41-mile Reroute Project:** In March 2025, the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and Midwest Environmental Advocates received an order granting a stay of the wetland and waterway permits for the Line 5 Reroute in Wisconsin while their legal challenge is being heard.

The Line 5 pipeline, situated in one of the busiest shipping lanes in the Great Lakes, has sustained repeated damage. Freight ship anchors, cables, and other objects have caused dents and gouges, and the pipeline's protective coating has been compromised.

What you can do:



**Get our Line 5
Citizen Action
Toolkit.**

Make public comments.

In 2025, EGLE is expected to take public comments on the tunnel project. **Tell EGLE why the tunnel is a dead end** for Michigan.

Use our Line 5 toolkit.

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

Share on social media.

Enbridge is working overtime to convince

Michiganders that we're dependent on Line 5, **but that's not true**. Fight back by sharing Flow's Line 5 posts with your networks.

Get the facts about the tunnel.

Download and share our new guide to the tunnel project at FlowWaterAdvocates.org/tunnel.

Support Flow's legal work.

Support Flow Water Advocates and our legal efforts to shut down Line 5, and get oil out of the Great Lakes. Visit FlowWaterAdvocates.org/donate.