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Sierra Club Wisconsin, 350-Madison: Call for rejection of Line 5

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MADISON- On Wednesday, activists called on the DNR and Army Corps to deny permits for Enbridge's Line 5 pipeline expansion proposal. Local community members met at the DNR building in critter hats designed to demonstrate the wildlife at risk from the pipeline. After remarks, they delivered an art project and a box containing petitions calling on the DNR to reject Enbridge's proposed new segment of the existing Line 5 pipeline. The petitions were also sent to the Army Corps of Engineers.

"Enbridge's proposed Line 5 expansion risks Wisconsin waters and wetlands, locks in fossil fuel infrastructure, and violates the treaty rights of Wisconsin's tribes. Despite demands by the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Ojibwe to move the pipeline outside of the Bad River watershed, calls by Wisconsinites to shut it down, and the science of climate change, Enbridge continues to propose investing in its 68-year old Line 5 pipeline," explained Elizabeth Ward, Director of the Sierra Club Wisconsin.

Activists delivered over 1,300 petitions to Department of Natural Resources Secretary Preston Cole and the Army Corps of Engineers. Additionally, a large art collage made up of art created by Wisconsinites across Wisconsin that depicts the risks of the pipeline was delivered. The people who delivered the petitions were wearing hats depicting fish, otters, turtles, and other animals that could be jeopardized by a spill on Enbridge's Line 5 pipeline, a pipeline that has already spilled over a million gallons of oil.

Dianne Brakarsh, of 350-Madison's Art Collective Team, describes the importance of art in the movement. "We use art in our messaging because it speaks to the heart and soul of this issue – the fact that an approval of the Line 5 reroute will endanger

many species, of which humans are only one, as well as fragile, precious ecosystems. People are using their creativity to call on the DNR to reject Line 5." In spring, the Art Collective Team demonstrated the importance of the animals and ecosystems at risk in a parade around the Capitol. You can view and use the video of the parade here: https://tinyurl.com/CritterParade

A spill on the Line 5 pipeline could contaminate the waterways and wetlands in the area, including the Bad River, the White River, the Kakagon Sloughs, and even Lake Superior. The 1842 U.S. treaty with Chippewa Tribes guarantees them the right to hunt, fish, and gather in ceded territory through which the Line 5 expansion is routed. This right is nullified if a spill results in contamination of the resources there. Finally, an investment in the pipeline like this new segment, could extend the life of the Line 5 pipeline and lock in more fossil fuel use, contrary to the Governor's Task Force on Climate Change recommendation to avoid all new fossil fuel infrastructure and at a time when the world needs to rapidly cut its carbon emissions.

Abby Novinska-Lois, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Health Professionals for Climate Action explained the risks to the health of Wisconsinites posed by the pipeline, "We have the clean energy technology available now to improve the health of Midwest families immediately. By switching to 100% clean energy in Wisconsin alone, we could avoid $21 billion in health damages every single year. We could see lower hospitalizations, fewer heart attacks, and less lives lost immediately. Continuing to invest in outdated and harmful fossil fuel infrastructure, like Line 5, is holding us back from the clean water, air, and better health our communities deserve."

In mid-December, the DNR released a draft of its environmental impact statement (DEIS) and is currently accepting public comments until March 4, 2022. The public is invited to submit comments on the DEIS by attending the public hearing on February 2 or writing to the DNR at DNROEEACOMMENTS@WI.GOV or by mail to: Line 5 EIS Comments, DNR (EA/7)," 101 South Webster Street, Madison, WI 53707.

Line 5 is the same pipeline facing fierce scrutiny in Michigan for the risk that the 68-year-old pipeline poses to Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. Michigan Governor Whitmer has ordered Enbridge to stop operating the pipeline under the Straits of Mackinac, but Enbridge has refused to comply.