

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Enbridge Drilling Fluid Spills at Mississippi Headwaters while Water Protectors Gather

SOLWAY, MN -- On Tuesday, July 20, with thick wildfire smoke in the air, water protectors holding space by the Mississippi River discovered Enbridge workers in the process of containing a spill in the marsh under which Enbridge is drilling for the new Line 3 pipeline.

Drone footage from the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) showed workers assembling containment booms and pumping material out of the wetland.

[Footage here](#) from Ron Turney

[Photo Here](#) from Ron Turney

“I noticed a worker looking down at the water just off the easement,” said Ron Turney with Indigenous Environmental Network. “That worker turned to his co-worker on the bridge with a worried look and told him to come look. They called in a clean up crew and a vacuum truck. We encountered that vacuum truck at the entrance to the easement where he nearly ran over some water protectors when he tried to push through the crowd.”

“Who is monitoring this? If there were not water protectors on site would anyone know about this spill?” When people call the MPCA there is not a ready response, the only people we saw during the spill were Enbridge workers. It looks like there is no oversight from state agencies on the ground.” Christy Dolph, water resources scientist

The spill of drilling fluid, known as a “[frac-out](#),” occurred at the pipeline drill site just downstream of the Mississippi headwaters, near County Rd 40. While Enbridge claims all frac-out fluids are non-toxic, some of the fluids are also trade secret and not able to be verified as safe by others. Water protectors were gathered by the Mississippi following a [press conference](#) this morning at Itasca State Park, where Minnesota legislators and local community leaders voiced opposition to Line 3. Following the press conference, water protectors went to the Mississippi crossing site and held a social round dance on the public road in the path of the pipeline.

The last restrictions under Enbridge’s Minnesota Pollution Control Agency permits preventing the company from drilling under wild rice waters, including the upper Mississippi, lifted on July 15. Enbridge’s route crosses the 1863, 1854, and 1855 treaty territory, where Anishinaabe people retain their inherent rights to hunt, fish, gather medicines, harvest wild rice, hold ceremony, and travel.

“We all warned that this was the worst possible place for a pipeline,” said Dawn Goodwin, White Earth tribal member, co-founder of the RISE Coalition and representative of Indigenous Environmental Network. “The original people of these lands know this place, with the Mississippi River in the La Salle valley, is special, and we were told in our teachings to protect it with our lives--and they’ve already contaminated it before the pipe is even installed.”

Enbridge recently requested and received approval for a tenfold increase in its dewatering permits, allowing the company to remove 5 billion gallons of water from along the pipeline’s route in northern Minnesota during construction. Northern Minnesota is currently in the [worst drought in a decade](#), and today northern Minnesota was under an air quality alert due to heavy wildfire smoke that hung over the area all day.

Testimony from Ron Turney, Indigenous Environmental Network:

During our gathering at La Salle Bridge on the Mississippi where Line 3 crosses, I noticed a worker looking down at the water just off the easement where Camp Firelight was located. I began taking pictures of him. That worker turned to his co-worker on the bridge with a worried look and told him to come look. They were both looking and called in a clean up crew and vacuum truck. We encountered that vacuum truck at the entrance to the easement where he nearly ran over some water protectors when he tried to push his way through the crowd. He was also operating the vehicle with a phone in his hands, while his passenger also had a phone out. Clearwater County Deputy allowed the Michels containment truck to flee the scene and would later attempt to pursue him. That Michels truck was later seen on the easement at the spill site minutes later. An excavator quickly brought 2 loads of sandbags and hose for the cleanup truck. The cleanup crew was scrambling to get the hose under the fence and into position. Meanwhile 4-5 workers were deploying sandbags in the swamp around the area. I observed them from above and saw booms in the river. I reviewed some footage from HOURS earlier and the spill can be seen from the air.

Witnesses available for interview

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