CLEAN WATER ACTION | MINNESOTA CURRENTS

Fall/Winter 2021 • The Clean Water Action Newsletter

The Fight to Stop Line 3

As of October 2021, Enbridge Energy announced that their Line 3 pipeline expansion project is operational. While there is still skepticism that oil has made its way completely through the new corridor, this announcement and the completion of construction is a disappointment — but not the end of the line in our fight.

Line 3 violates treaties, endangers our water, and continues to feed the world's addiction to fossil fuels. There were numerous construction anomalies, including many frac-outs (drilling fluid released to the surface) and the puncturing of an aquifer that has yet to be resolved. Despite all of this, Minnesota government and state agencies refuse to intervene in any meaningful way. Enbridge has gotten away with little more than a slap on the wrist while destroying our environment.

While the completed construction and operation beginning is a blow to the movement, it is not the end. The previous Line 3 was responsible for the largest inland oil spill in US history, over 20 years after its operation. The sooner we stop the new Line 3, the more we can protect our environment from future spills. There are also the ongoing climate impacts as Line 3 continues to ship tar sands oil, one of the dirtiest fossil fuels, out to the world economy. The fight to protect our air, water, and futures is nowhere near over, and we can't give up now.

At this point, all eyes are on President Biden and the Army Corps of Engineers. President Biden has the ability to revoke the presidential permit for Line 3, stopping operation. He can also have the Army Corps conduct a federal Environmental Impact Statement, similar to what is being done for Line 5 and Dakota Access Pipeline. Under President Trump, the federal permits for Line 3 were granted without any real analysis of the environmental and social impacts the pipeline would have. This must be amended by the Biden administration, in order to protect air and water and to stand in solidarity with Indigenous communities.

*Go to **cleanwater.org/pipelines** to learn more, take action, and share — our future is freshwater, not fossil fuels.*

Minnesota Needs Sustainable, Healthy, & Informed Grocery Shopping Options

We all need to eat, but how do our choices in the food we purchase affect our planet? Study after study has shown the impact that animal farming can have on the climate and our water — and it isn't good. The choices we make about food matter. Grocery stores are the backbone of our communities, and access to good affordable food is essential so Clean Water Action's Field to Fork Program is reaching out to local grocery stores as a major driver of our food system to encourage them to offer more sustainable and healthy options for Minnesota shoppers. ***Sign your name*** so that all Minnesotans are able to make informed purchasing decisions for ourselves, our families, and our environment.

Let's Get the Lead Out of our Water!

According to the *Center for Disease Control*, the risk of lead poisoning falls disproportionately on Black children who are nearly three times more likely than white children to have elevated blood-lead levels. Some of the health impacts include attention difficulties, behavior changes, lowered IQ, and overall slowed development which can lead to lifelong inequities for children exposed to lead.

Congress and state legislators are debating how to address lead poisoning and there are proposals at both levels of government to fund programs to replace all Lead Service Lines (LSLs). A service line is the pipe that provides water service to your tap, connecting the public water supply main pipe to your home. The Minnesota Department of Health estimates there are at least *100,000 LSLs leading to our homes in Minnesota*. Exposure to lead from drinking water is less common than other pathways such as lead paint yet, as demonstrated in Flint, MI, can have serious consequences.

Our leaders need to address this problem now at all levels of government. *At the federal level* the infrastructure plans Congress is debating now have funding to replace LSLs. $15 billion has been included in the recently passed and signed Infrastructure Bill, but the total needed to replace every LSL in the country is estimated to $45 billion. There is still an opportunity to secure more funding in the Build Back Better Act — *click here to send a message to your members of Congress*. In Minnesota, State House Bill HF2650 would create a grant program to fully fund the replacement of the over 100,000 LSLs in Minnesota homes. Local leaders also need to get to work, creating lists of homes that might have LSLs and starting the extensive planning process to get the funding from the federal and state government to get shovels into the ground and replace all old lead lines.

This is important because there is no safe level of lead in our air or water. Lead is a highly poisonous metal and can affect almost every organ in the body and the nervous system. Because they absorb more lead than adults and because their brains and nervous systems are still developing, children under 6 and the developing fetus are most susceptible to lead exposure.

A 2020 study by International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health found that black children living below the US federal poverty level are *four times as likely to have elevated levels of lead in their blood than white or Hispanic children living below the US federal poverty level*. This isn't just a problem with living in poverty, but a clear example of endemic racism and a lack of equitable access affecting daily life: the housing we can afford can determine if lead is present; if exposed to lead, health care access and affordability can affect if kids are treated properly; lack of access to nutritious food and malnutrition can worsen health impacts of lead exposure. All of this affects learning abilities and education, and as a result lifelong economic opportunity.

Not only do communities need funding to replace LSLs, policies need to change to ensure that the communities that are most affected are first in line to access the funding from the federal and state government. In general, these communities have the most lead in their water, but fewer resources or financial credit to access loan funds. Funding to cover full costs for vulnerable communities are critical. Work also needs to be done in communities to ensure LSL replacement planning is easy and accessible for both homeowners as well as aiding renters who may be unaware of the risk.

In the 1970's, lead was banned in car gasoline and in some paints and lead levels dramatically decreased. Unfortunately, lead poisoning problems persist, especially Black communities, 50 years later. It is time to finally address and solve this problem now by funding programs and passing policies at all levels of government that will replace all LSLs and other sources of lead poisoning in Minnesota homes.

What EPA's PFAS Roadmap means for Minnesota

2021 has been a big year for tackling the PFAS Forever Chemical problem in Minnesota! Our state agencies released a *PFAS Blueprint*, we passed a *ban on use of PFAS chemicals in food packaging*, and the *final plan for spending the 3M Settlement dollars* was released.

Now the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has released their own nationwide *PFAS Strategic Roadmap*. Let's break down what that means for Minnesota:

EPA will use its authority to gather tons of new and existing data about PFAS

One of the biggest challenges to regulating PFAS chemicals has historically been the lack of data we have on each of the individual chemicals (over 4,700) and the class as a whole. We're happy to see that EPA will be using their powers under the Toxic Substances Control Act, Toxics Release Inventory, and Safe Drinking Water Act to enhance data gathering and reporting from manufacturers of PFAS. EPA data is generally available to state agencies and the information gathered will help our state regulators make the best decisions to protect Minnesotans.

EPA will help advance PFAS science

One of EPA's roles in the scientific community is to develop and publish accepted testing methods so those studying impacts to human health and the environment can work using common, shared, best practices. Testing for PFAS contamination is especially difficult as the chemicals can be dangerous in incredibly small concentrations — along the level of parts per trillion. To put that in perspective, that's one drop in an Olympic sized swimming pool — exactly why the development of robust detection methods is critical. Minnesota is home to top testing labs, including in our state government and at the University of Minnesota, that will be able to put these best practices into use. The EPA committing to developing detection, treatment, and cleanup technology and methodology is essential to help Minnesota identify the scope of the problem — and clean up the mess.

EPA will propose (some) rules and regulations

Our most foundational environmental laws at the state level tend to be intertwined with federal laws like the Clean Water Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, and Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA, better known as Superfund). When EPA takes action like designating certain PFAS as Superfund hazardous substances, that allows our state agencies to use resources and tools that are available under Minnesota's state Superfund law, MERLA. Minnesota agencies also create water quality standards for contaminants based on EPA's Clean Water Act criteria. We are very pleased to see EPA start these processes — however, EPA is only taking these actions for two of the worst PFAS chemicals (PFOA and PFOS). Thousands more chemicals exist in the PFAS class. We need is an approach from EPA that addresses PFAS as a full class of chemicals.

Where we need to go from here

Overall, it is truly good to see our federal government come out with a solid, actionable plan. In comparison, the Trump Administration so-called "PFAS Action Plan" was weak at best. We would like to see the Biden EPA go further with regulatory measures. States like Minnesota have been taking action while waiting years for a strong federal response. With so many types of PFAS used in countless products and applications despite the known dangers, it's imperative the entire class of "forever chemicals" is addressed if we're going to truly protect our water, environment, and our health.

To hear more about this issue, listen to Clean Water Action's Minnesota State Director Deanna White and Toxics Organizer Tom Johnson speaking on *Minnesota Public Radio*.

Plastics and Climate — Why We Need to ReThink Disposable

The Great Lakes amount to 95% of all the freshwater that exists within the United States and are the primary drinking water source for 40 million people, easily making these waters our most precious natural resource. Yet throughout the Great Lakes region, we are seeing increased contamination from all number of sources — including single use plastics.

Global plastic production has increased dramatically in the last 50 years and is projected to quadruple by 2050. The Rochester Institute of Technology estimates 22 million pounds of plastic enter the Great Lakes annually, mostly from single-use containers and packaging, plastic bags, and microfibers. The increasing level of microplastics in our water is a huge public health concern in multiple ways.

Single-use plastics are big contributors to the waste stream, with only 20% of plastic products are collected for recycling — the rest ending up in landfills, incinerators, or litter. Plastics are being found more frequently in wildlife, including the fish we eat. When plastics break down into microplastics, chemicals like PFAS leach out and are released. Wastewater and drinking water systems

were not originally designed to handle these pollutants. Now they're faced with spending large sums of money investing in expensive treatment system upgrades — or risk putting customer our health at risk when these toxic contaminants make it through to our tap water. Finally, as demand for oil and gas decreases the fossil fuel industry is looking to plastic production. Plastics could represent as much as 95% of the net growth in demand for oil in the coming decades which would double the projected annual emissions associate with plastics by mid-century.

ReThink Disposable
STOP WASTE BEFORE IT STARTS

Learn more about plastic pollution, what Clean Water Action is doing, and how you can take action by joining us for our *December Water Action Wednesday member briefing on December 8 at 7 PM*, or catch the video after along with our other Water Action Wednesday briefings on our *main page*. Don't forget to mark your calendar for our *2022 Minnesota Legislative Preview* on January 12th too!

PROFILES IN PREVENTION
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Looking for inspiration? Check out our *Profiles in Prevention* to find stories about Minnesotans who have made changes to prevent pollution and protect our environment. Some actions are big, some are small, but all of them matter!

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CURRENTS is published by Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund.