



WHITE EARTH RESERVATION

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White Earth RBC Continues to Stand Against the Line 3 Construction Project

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 24, 2021

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White Earth, Minnesota – As the people of the White Earth Reservation gathered today in a walk/run, ceremony and feast to protect our water and manoomin, the White Earth Reservation Business Committee continues to stand strong in opposition to the construction of the Enbridge Line 3 Replacement Project through our 1855 Treaty territory.

Last week, word came through concerned Band members about water being taken from Upper Rice Lake. While this taking of water was not by Enbridge and was for a local road construction project, it raised serious concerns about how State and Federal authorities are handling the issue of water displacement during a moderate drought. The RBC took immediate action to meet with decisionmakers in the Army Corps of Engineering and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

On Monday, June 21, 2021, leaders from White Earth and Red Lake consulted with Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) Jaime Pinkham and others to discuss concerns relating to the Army Corps of Engineers' permit issued to Enbridge for the construction of Line 3. The RBC brought forward violations regarding the consultation process before the permit was issued, as well as numerous concerns about the replacement project since construction commenced pursuant to the permit. The RBC again requested the Army Corps rescind or suspend their permit and asked that the Biden Administration stand by its pledge to Indian Country and our environment by stopping this construction project. Conversations with the Army Corps are on-going and White Earth and others remain in federal litigation against the Army Corps regarding the permit. The RBC will continue to do everything in its power to get the federal permit suspended or rescinded.

On Tuesday, June 22, 2021, White Earth leaders requested action from the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Tribal Executive Committee regarding the construction dewatering permit amendment issued by the Minnesota DNR on June 4, 2021. This dewatering permit allows Enbridge to displace up to almost 5 billion gallons of water during its construction project. Last year, the DNR issued a permit that allowed Enbridge to displace approximately 500 million gallons of water. While surface water is not being displaced through this permit, allowing the displacement of such a substantial amount of groundwater in and around the Mississippi headwaters watershed and under so many of our traditional wild rice beds is extremely alarming. The Tribal Executive Committee authorized a letter to Governor Tim Walz requesting that this permit amendment be suspended or rescinded.

The DNR did not engage in meaningful government-to-government consultation with the White Earth Reservation or its leadership prior to issuing its permit amendment on June 4, and the RBC immediately reached out to DNR Commissioner Strommen to raise its objection to the permit. The RBC will be meeting with Commissioner Strommen and MN DNR leadership, along with staff from Governor Walz's office, on Friday, June 25, 2021 to formally request that the permit amendment be rescinded.

The RBC is also addressing the issue of tribally approved cultural monitors along the construction route. The only cultural monitors reviewing the construction project to date have been approved by Enbridge, and the RBC will consider a proposal to expand its Tribal Historic Preservation Office functions at the regular RBC meeting on Friday, June 25, 2021. This expansion will include White Earth approved cultural monitors to ensure that historically and culturally significant sites and resources along the construction route remain undisturbed.

The White Earth RBC is united in seeing the Line 3 Replacement Project halted before any further degradation to our environment can take place. The RBC stands in solidarity with our people in protecting our water and will continue to utilize every means available to stop this project from moving forward.

The RBC wishes to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of so many of our Band members in protecting our natural resources. Chi miigwech to our pipe carriers, the organizers and volunteers on the run and walk today and for coming together to stand strong for our water and manoomin.

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The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe

June 22, 2021

The Honorable Tim Walz
Governor
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Request for Rescinding of DNR Dewatering Permit

Dear Governor Walz:

I write to you today on behalf of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe regarding the Water Appropriation Permit Amendment No 2018-3420 (Construction Dewatering) that was issued by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources on June 4, 2021 pursuant to Minnesota Statute §103G.271. The White Earth Reservation was not given sufficient notice, nor did the Department of Natural Resources engage in consultation with the White Earth Reservation in violation of Executive Order 19-24.

The Permit Amendment increases the amount of water that the Enbridge Line 3 Replacement Project may displace from some 510.5 million gallons to 4,982 billion gallons. This is a tenfold increase in the originally approved water appropriation permit. While there was a conversation between a White Earth staff person and a DNR staff person, there was no attempt made at a government-to-government consultation prior to issuing this permit on June 4, 2021.

Given the high temperatures and the low precipitation this season, northern Minnesota is in a moderate draught. Water levels are already dangerously low and displacing this many gallons of water will undoubtedly have a detrimental impact on our wild rice, which is our most sacred food. Time is of the essence, and I ask that you direct the Department of Natural Resources to rescind Water Appropriation Permit Amendment No. 2018-3420 until such time as the Department consults with the White Earth Reservation and all other impacted tribes as contemplated by Executive Order 19-24.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Miigwech,

Catherine J. Chavers
President

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