

Summer 2025 • The Clean Water Action Newsletter

A Critical Moment in the Fight to Shut Down Line 5

The aging Line 5 oil pipeline under the Straits of Mackinac, where Lake Huron and Lake Michigan meet, has been an immense risk to our lakes for decades. The proposed “solution” is a tunnel dug under the Straits for the pipeline that transports nearly 23 millions gallons of crude oil and natural gas liquids every day.

The problems with the proposed tunnel are numerous — and dangerous. The tunnel construction would keep the pipeline open for 6-10 years, which is a risky gamble every day it remains open. However, the tunnel construction itself would be extremely dangerous to our environment and potentially the safety of the workers. Experienced geological tunnel engineers have raised numerous red flags from the wastewater generated, poor quality of bedrock, potential for a methane explosion, and more.

Two permits are pending before the tunnel construction can go ahead. One from the Army Corps of Engineers is being fast-tracked with little regard for safety concerns. The State of Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) also needs to issue their own approval. We are urging EGLE to take the right action to protect our Great

Lakes by denying the tunnel permit and are continuing to work to shut down Line 5 for good.

July 26th marks the 15th anniversary of the Kalamazoo Oil Spill, one of the biggest inland oil spills in US history. The rupture of Enbridge’s Line 6B pipeline wasn’t noticed for 17 hours, by which point around one million gallons of crude tar sands oil had entered Talmage Creek, which leads to the Kalamazoo River. Enbridge is the same company that operates the Line 5 pipeline, and just as with Line 5 right now, Enbridge knew of the risks of Line 6B and continued to operate anyway, causing an ecological catastrophe we cannot forget. Line 5 has already spilled one million gallons into our Great Lakes over the nearly seven decades it has been in operation. Every day that Line 5 continues to operate, our water is at risk and the future of the Great Lakes hangs in the balance.

We can’t be fooled again by false promises of safety from Enbridge. Michigan must protect our freshwater future.

We need your voice! The Line 5 tunnel project needs a permit from EGLE and a public comment period is upcoming. If you’re from Michigan or someone who just appreciates the beauty and necessity of the Great Lakes, send a message to Governor Whitmer and EGLE Director Roos at cleanwater.org/NoTunnel

Nearly 200 Michiganders from across the state met on Mackinac Island to protest Line 5 and the proposed tunnel during the Mackinac Policy Conference in May. ►



Building a Michigan for the Many

Across the country, we find ourselves in an untenable political situation. Hard-fought environmental protections are being threatened, armed and masked men kidnap our neighbors off the street, and the executive branch ignores judicial orders and violates our laws with impunity. The legislative branch has rendered itself nearly useless through subservience on one side and a lack of vision and unwillingness to fight on the other. Meanwhile, working people are struggling to get by, and people are beginning to lose faith in democracy altogether. The situation is no less bleak here in Michigan, where state leadership seeks a policy of appeasement. The only things our legislature can seem to agree on are more tax cuts and incentives for corporations at the expense of the underfunded critical services on which we all rely.

It is against this backdrop, when the odds are seemingly stacked against the people and the oligarchs seem poised to prevail, that we are joining with other community-focused groups across the state to form the **Michigan for the Many** coalition. Our goals are ambitious, but now is not the time for normal politics or wishful incrementalism. Now is the time for bold, visionary organizing — and that is what we aim to do.

For too long, corporations and billionaires have rigged the rules to hoard power and profit while working families struggle. Now is the time to change that.

We are building a future for Michigan in which our economy and democracy work for everyone.

Where our government takes the necessary action

to ensure that all Michigan residents have access to safe, clean, affordable drinking water and that we are doing our part to address the global climate crisis. That is why we are coming together to get money out of politics, make housing and healthcare affordable for all, tax the rich to fund public goods, and guarantee paid family leave for all workers.

The Michigan for the Many coalition is starting off by leading two 2025 ballot initiatives:

- **Michiganders for Money Out of Politics** will prohibit regulated utilities, like DTE and Consumers Energy, and large state contractors, like Blue Cross Blue Shield and Aramark, from spending money to influence our elections.
- **Invest in MI Kids** will increase taxes by 5% on single filers with incomes over \$500,000 and joint filers with incomes over \$1,000,000, creating \$1.7 billion to fund our K-12 schools.

These are lofty goals and accomplishing them will not be easy. It will take millions of people across Michigan coming together and demanding a change to the status quo. We're going to need a grassroots army to help collect signatures over the next several months, and I know we can count on our Clean Water Action members all over Michigan to get involved.

When we address our underfunded public schools, we give all our kids a better chance of success. When we stop the flow of utility money into the campaign coffers of our elected officials and take back our power, we enable them to take real action on climate and to put their constituents first.

GET INVOLVED! We are building a grassroots army to help collect signatures and ensure that these critical ballot initiatives succeed. Whether you can help out for a weekend or for every step of the campaign, people power is how we're going to win. Sign up at cleanwater.org/MIvolunteer and one of our organizers will be in touch soon!



Meet Our New Volunteer Coordinators



Hello all! I'm **Madison Goff**. I joined Clean Water Action in January of 2022 as a Field Canvasser and soon became a Field Manager. If I've knocked on your door, I probably asked about the native plants growing in your garden! I'm very excited to start in my new role as the Southeast Michigan Volunteer Coordinator.

My undergraduate degree is in Biological Engineering from the University of Arkansas (Woo Pig Sooie!). While in school, I became really interested in answering the question, "why haven't all these great technological solutions saved the world already?" This question led me to the University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability, focusing on environmental policy and environmental education. We need to build up the social and political willpower to solve today's big problems.

Our number one obstacle is corporate power — and the way it's wielded to buy our politicians and undermine meaningful progress. That's why I'm excited to continue to work with community members to hold our government and corporations accountable to the will of the people. The best way you can help with this goal is by becoming a volunteer. Sign up at cleanwater.org/MIvolunteer/

My name is **Duncan Donahue** and I am the new volunteer coordinator for West Michigan with a particular focus on Kent County. I grew up in South Bend, Indiana and Midland, Michigan before my family relocated to Grand Rapids in 2020. I graduated in 2022 from the University of Notre Dame with a degree in Sociology and Peace Studies. While I student, I got my start in organizing where as a national trainer and local chapter coordinator for the Sunrise Movement in South Bend.



I began my organizing work with Clean Water Action in 2022 as part of the summer field canvass, where I was Madison Goff's first observing trainee! I spent two summers in the field canvass in between teaching English overseas through Fulbright Austria, then I returned to year-round organizing work with Clean Water Action in June 2024. In my free time, I enjoy watching Survivor, hiking, and learning about local Michigan history.

I am driven to the fight for environmental justice because I see it as a lynchpin that can connect diverse social movements for justice in a broad coalition, striving together for an equitable and green future. I look forward to working with many of you to build a Michigan that works for all of us — not just the wealthy few.

Legislative Update

Even the most politically engaged Michigander would be forgiven for assuming that the current Legislative session has been wholly consumed by budget gridlock and culture-war signaling. The recipe for a standstill seems complete. However, there are notable exceptions to partisan political games that frustrate so many.

The Good

Polluter Pay

HB 4640, 4636, 4638, 4637, 4639

There is some good news in Lansing! Senator Jeff Irwin led a coalition of Democratic lawmakers from both chambers to reintroduce a Polluter Pay legislative package. Let's make sure that Michiganders aren't left bearing the costs of clean up and health problems caused by the mess corporate polluters make.

Contact your Michigan legislators to urge support for Polluter Pay legislation [here](#).

Water Affordability

SB 248-256

Senator Stephanie Chang reintroduced a Water Affordability package that brings together almost a decade of hard work and compromise among a wide array of stakeholders. This bipartisan legislative effort will provide a comprehensive plan for long-term access to water for every person in Michigan, no matter their household income. Let's finally get this done — water as the basic necessity of life should be guaranteed in the Great Lakes state!

Contact your Michigan legislators in support of Water Affordability legislation [here](#).

The Bad

A handful of bi-partisan legislation has been introduced and even voted to proceed out of various Committees. The bad news is, these bi-partisan points of unity are also unified by 1) support from profit-motivated fossil fuel industries that

are at the table when the legislation is written, and 2) opposition from environmental non-profits and activists whose primary chance to respond and question only comes after the Bills are presented..

Clean Water Action recently submitted opposition to the Bills summarized below, to become part of the official records kept by the Committee Clerks. **We encourage our 130,000 members throughout Michigan to call their State Representatives and Senators to express opposition to these Bills**, since the bi-partisan nature makes it far more likely that the issues will eventually come up for full floor votes.

HB 4257, HB 4265: deregulation of anaerobic digesters, removes EGLE oversight of digestate byproduct contents and application, resulting in a lack of regulatory monitoring for wastewater violations.

SB 235, SB 236: up to \$9 million annual tax break incentives for industry buy-in on Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) — but without any requirements to strictly account for life-cycle greenhouse emissions of eligible feedstocks.

SB 394, SB 395, SB 396: renewed fervor to incentivize Carbon Capture Storage (CCS) and storage technologies, but fails to account for the unknowns regarding emergency planning, pipeline transport infrastructure, and potential dangers to groundwater. Questionable returns on investment for actual amount of carbon stored, and unclear timeline and unknowns of overall environ-

mental footprint related to massive infrastructure development are also concerns.

The Urgency

As fossil fuel lobbyists pitch greenwashed offerings as a “win-win” for business interests and the environment, the proposals are rife with unaddressed red flags. Furthermore, prioritizing industry greenlighted legislation takes focus and investment away from addressing other long-standing needs such as degraded water infrastructure; E. coli contamination of rivers and streams and lakes; collapse of fish populations; harmful algal blooms from agricultural run-off, toxic chemical contamination, and the general overall need to address the climate crisis.

When industry is invited to the table to greenlight climate legislation, there will be no mention of nature-based solutions that have proven successful by a wide swath of measures. Solutions that prioritize working with the healing capacity of natural systems offer enviable returns on investment — lower costs, community-led, and suited to addressing the multi-pronged emergency that is our current state of ecological collapse.

Anaerobic digesters, SAF, and CCS are all currently enjoying a prioritized approval process, which means now is the time to call your State Representative and Senator and state your opposition to false Climate solutions.

Drastic Budget Cuts Would Put Clean Water at Risk

The Trump administration's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget proposal threatens to eliminate critical State and Tribal Assistance Grants (STAG) under the Clean Water Act — putting public health, environmental protection, and local economies at serious risk. These grants fund essential state programs that monitor water quality, control pollution, issue permits, and support community-led restoration. Without this funding, many states report they would be forced to shut down core clean water operations, lay off staff, and abandon key projects that protect drinking water, prevent harmful algal blooms, and ensure safe rivers and lakes. Clean Water Action has urged Congress to reject this proposal and is partnering with fellow advocacy groups to educate lawmakers on its harmful consequences. Learn more about potential impacts of the White House budget proposal [here](#).

Clean Water Action has been monitoring the reconciliation Bill H.R. 1 (the “Big Beautiful Bill”), which would gut essential protections for our water and communities. This legislation slashes funding for coastal resilience, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) facilities, and environmental justice programs. These are vital investments that safeguard drinking water, protect vulnerable communities, and prepare for climate impacts. It strips away the regulatory tools needed to prevent pollution and hold polluters accountable. We need bold, equitable action to protect clean water, not rollbacks that put public health and our environment at risk.

Around Town: Source Water Collaborative Member Meeting

Source Water Collaborative's Co-Chairs Lynn Thorp (Clean Water Action) and Deirdre White (Association of State Drinking Water Administrators) welcomed attendees to the annual Source Water Collaborative Member Meeting on June 17. This hybrid gathering brought together 31 national organizations to give updates, exchange ideas, and advance the shared goal of protecting America's drinking water at the source.

Toxic Chemicals:

EPA Should Do More — Not Less — to Keep PFAS Chemicals Out of Our Water

In April 2024, Clean Water Action applauded EPA for finalizing drinking water limits for six of the notorious per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) chemicals. PFAS are widely used chemicals that are highly persistent in the environment, have been found in drinking water sources nationwide, and are known to cause serious health problems. Yet this May, EPA announced plans that it would reconsider these Safe Drinking Water Act limits for four PFAS chemicals and delay protections for two more. Clean Water Action [released a statement](#) opposing weakening these health-based drinking water limits and urging EPA to accelerate Clean Water Act pollution limits and other initiatives that would keep PFAS out of our water and the environment in the first place.

These are examples of why we must urge our representatives not to cut EPA's budget or weaken our environmental and health safeguards.

[Take action today!](#)

Celebrating \$1 million in micro-donations!



Clean Water Fund's long-running partnership with SurveyMonkey's Contribute program recently passed a major milestone: \$1 million donated to Clean Water Fund, and counting. One powerful demonstration of what we mean when we talk about “strength in numbers.”

You can help speed us on our way toward a second \$1 million. Just join the almost half-million others who have signed up to take surveys benefiting Clean Water Fund.

Learn more at
cleanwater.org/surveys