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CURE applauds PUC decision requiring environmental review for CO₂ pipeline but troubled by limited scope

St. Paul, Minnesota, January 6, 2023 — On Thursday, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) unanimously voted to require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as a necessary component of the permitting process for Summit Carbon Solutions' (Summit) carbon dioxide (CO₂) pipeline. In doing so, the PUC denied Summit's attempt to fast-track the review process of its hazardous CO₂ pipeline project and agreed with CURE (Clean Up the River Environment) and the majority of organizations, Tribes, and individual Minnesotans who weighed in during the recent comment period requesting a rigorous environmental review.

"We're very pleased with the PUC's decision to order an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The process will ensure a detailed review of the proposed project's potential environmental, human, social, and economic impacts while providing opportunities for public engagement," said Sarah Mooradian, CURE's Government Relations & Policy Director. She continued, "As a number of the Commissioners noted, the public must be able to trust that the PUC is carefully assessing the impacts of this first-of-its-kind project, and an EIS offers a far more robust analysis than what Summit was arguing for."

In mid-September, Iowa-based Summit submitted its first route permit application to the PUC for the Otter Tail and Wilkin Counties section of its proposed Midwest Carbon Express CO₂ pipeline network in Minnesota. This portion of the pipeline would connect the Green Plains ethanol plant at Fergus Falls with a larger multi-state network of pipelines as part of a \$4.5 billion project that aims to capture CO₂ emissions from dozens of ethanol and other industrial facilities throughout the Midwest.

CURE also expressed concerns about the PUC's decision to deny a petition for review of the entire geography of the CO₂ pipeline project in the state. In November 2021, CURE submitted a Citizen Petition—a process provided under the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)—on behalf of hundreds of Minnesotans requesting review of the more than 234 miles of highly pressurized CO₂ pipeline proposed by Summit for Minnesota. The PUC dismissed that MEPA petition without addressing the claims it brought about the wider, cumulative impacts of the project. According to Peg Furshong, CURE's Programs Director, who has been organizing landowners and other community members who the pipeline will directly impact: "The Commissioners emphasized that they were listening to the voices of the hundreds of Minnesotans who are alarmed by Summit's attempts to bring this hazardous project to Minnesota. So, it's perplexing that they ignored those Minnesotans who used their right under MEPA to bring forward concerns and questions about the impact this large-scale pipeline network will have throughout the state. Taking this piecemeal approach runs the risk of missing the cumulative impacts of this 230-mile-plus project."

The process of environmental review will provide a number of opportunities for public engagement in the form of public meetings and written comment periods, which are essential to ensuring that the process reflects the range of issues and concerns that Minnesotans want to see addressed. Once completed the EIS is intended to inform PUC and other state agency permitting decisions but does not guarantee project approval.

More information:

MNPUC Press Release: [Public Utilities Commission requires additional environmental review for carbon pipeline in Western Minnesota](#), 01/05/2023

Additional info about CO2 pipelines: www.carbonpipelinemn.org

CURE (Clean Up the River Environment) is a rural-based organization focusing on climate, energy, water, and democracy issues with offices in Montevideo, Minnesota. Our work strives to build grassroots community power to address the linkages between environmental challenges, societal inequities, and other systemic challenges facing our communities.

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