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Minnesota regulators vote to require environmental review for proposed hazardous CO₂ pipeline—but only for 2 out of 10 impacted counties

Montevideo, Minnesota, January 10, 2023 — Last week, 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 Montevideo-based 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. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is the most extensive environmental review the PUC can require and is commonly done on large projects such as oil pipelines.

"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 impacts on people, communities, the environment, and the economy. People across Minnesota, as well as those in impacted communities, will also have the opportunity to share their concerns," 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. According to maps from Summit's website, the proposed project in Minnesota will include 240 miles of pipeline and run through Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Martin, Redwood, Renville, and Yellow Medicine Counties in addition to Otter Tail and Wilkin Counties.

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 entire proposed pipeline route in Minnesota, not just segments. 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 massive project.

Individual Minnesotans living in the geography of Summit's pipeline project also questioned whether the PUC and state leaders are truly listening to their concerns. "As a landowner from Redwood County, I am disappointed that the PUC did not order the EIS for the entire proposed route in Minnesota. Summit is signing easements with my neighbors, and it is clear that they have plans for many more miles in Minnesota than is in their current route permit application," said Dan Henriksen, a farmer and landowner near Vesta.

Now that an EIS has been ordered for the Otter Tail and Wilkin County segment of the CO2 pipeline, the environmental review process will provide a number of opportunities for public engagement in the form of public meetings and written comment periods. These steps 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.carbonpipelinesmn.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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