

# The Bemidji Pioneer

NEWS

## **Line 3 opposition tours ‘Misi-ziibi’ Headwaters amid drought, Enbridge declares project 70% finished**

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Written By: [Hannah Olson](#) | 7:32 pm, Jul. 20, 2021



Dawn Goodwin, co-founder of the Indigenous women-led group the RISE Coalition, speaks at the beginning of a Line 3 opposition event on Tuesday, July 20, 2021, at the Headwaters of the Mississippi River. (Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer)

**ITASCA STATE PARK --** In the ongoing and contentious Line 3 replacement project debate, things are heating up.

The pipeline is edging closer to the Mississippi River as drought rampages across the state, leaving waterbeds shallow and dry, and ominous smoke hangs in the air from Canadian wildfires. Recent weeks have seen an uptick in protests, with controversy centering on how much water is permitted for the construction of the tar sands pipeline.

Representatives from Enbridge said the 330-mile replacement project is 70% complete, but despite this, “water protectors” remain steadfast in their opposition. Line 3, in its entirety, stretches 1,097 miles from the tar sands of Edmonton, Alberta to Superior, Wis.

On Tuesday, July 20, organizations gathered press and politicians at the Headwaters of the Mississippi River in Itasca State Park to demonstrate the impacts of Line 3 to states downstream on the Mississippi River, and speak about treaty rights.

Organizers included the Rights of Mississippi River, the RISE Coalition, Science for the People - Twin Cities, Vote Climate, MN350 and Health Professionals for a Healthy Climate.

The event was titled “10 States Sharing One Misi-ziibi: Dewatering, Deforestation, and Destruction at Headwaters” and organizers had set aside ten chairs for the governors of the states that touch Mississippi River waters -- Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana.

The chairs sat empty throughout the event.



An event to draw attention to Enbridge drilling under the Mississippi River for the Line 3 pipeline project was held at the Headwaters on Tuesday, July 20, 2021. (Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer)

Organizers kicked off the morning with prayers down on the waters’ edge. The words “Don’t trample our treaties” were etched into the sand so they could be seen overhead from the Headwaters live stream camera.

As handfuls of tourists snapped photos with the iconic Headwaters pine log carved with yellow letters marking the beginning of the great river’s 2,552-mile route from Minnesota's north woods to the Gulf of Mexico, five water protectors in a line hoisted up five large teardrop-shaped signs denoting the number of gallons of water Enbridge was recently approved to use.



Five water protectors hold up five large signs denoting the number of gallons of water Enbridge was recently approved to use while constructing the pipeline replacement. (Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer)

It was clear the event was meant to engage the public. The chosen location, not along the construction site route, but rather at the tourist-flocked Headwaters, caused many passersby and tourists to inquire about the pipeline.

Visitors tiptoed over wet rocks, portaging the mighty Mississippi where it softly begins as Small children splashed in the Headwaters. Canoes glided across the water as one water protector stood quietly by with a sign she had made bearing the words, “Your vacation is in danger.”

Following the press conference, the group toured locations to witness drought-affected manoomin -- wild rice -- lakes and a construction site that has been dewatering the river.



The words “Don’t trample our treaties” can be seen in this screenshot of the Mississippi River Headwaters live stream camera. (Screenshot)

## Voice for the river

Speakers throughout the event emphasized the importance of respecting water and being a voice for the river.

“We are fighting for legal personhood rights for the river all the way from here at the sacred Headwaters down to the Gulf,” speaker Hannah Jo King from the Rights of the Mississippi River group said.

Dawn Goodwin, co-founder of the Indigenous women-led group the RISE Coalition, spoke about her experiences in the treaty camps.

“It’s one thing to disrespect the Anishinaabe people, to disrespect the Mississippi and all these waters. But to disrespect the people trying to protect it is so shameful,” Goodwin said. “Now is the time to honor those treaties, because they are the supreme law of the land. They’re in our Constitution under Article Six. The time is now. We are rising and we will continue to rise because we know that water is essential to life.”

Many speakers cited treaties, with some reading directly from the Constitution, highlighting either parts of the Bill of Rights or Article Six. Article Six of the United States Constitution establishes the laws and treaties of the United States made in accordance with it as the supreme law of the land.

“This Constitution, and the laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof; and all treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land; and the judges in every state shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding,” speaker Bob Shimek, treaty rights expert, read aloud from a pocket copy of the Constitution, which he referred to as the Bible, during the event.

Shimek asked attendees to try to imagine what their ancestors were hoping to do by signing those treaties years ago.

“Our ancestors looked around and what was going on, on the land around them. They knew they understood that if the Anishinaabe were to survive, they were going to have to codify their way of life,” he said. “That’s what they did when they signed these treaties. They guaranteed to all generations, yet to come in perpetuity, the right to hunt, the right to fish and the right to gather the right to occupancy and the right to travel. That’s what they were doing.”



Treaty rights expert Bob Shimek talks at a Line 3 opposition event on Tuesday, July 20, 2021, at the Headwaters of the Mississippi River. (Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer)

“What good is a right to fish if the fish aren't fit to eat? What good is the right to water? If the water is not fit to drink? Our ancestors protected that. That's what we understand about our relationship with the treaties,” Shimek continued.

“This is more than a pipeline,” echoed Nancy Beaulieu, co-founder of the RISE Coalition. “This is about treaties, responsibilities and obligations. Those treaties were intended for us to live in peace, and to leave this earth in a better way than we found it.

“As we see, Enbridge's Line 3 has rubber-stamped their way through this project. They are pumping 5 billion more gallons of water. We must understand when those treaties were signed, they were with good intentions for all of us, not just our people. When they take our water without our permission, that's an assault on our culture.”

A small delegation of politicians from around the state did speak during the event, despite the lack of invited governors, which speakers gestured to throughout the morning. In attendance were Bemidji City Councilor Daniel Jourdain, Minnesota District 64 Sen. Erin Murphy, DFL; Minnesota District 61A Rep. Frank Hornstein, DFL; Minnesota District 61 Sen. Scott Dibble, DFL; and Minnesota District 4A Rep. Heather Keeler, DFL



Bemidji City Councilor Daniel Jourdain speaks at a Line 3 opposition event on Tuesday, July 20, 2021, at the Headwaters of the Mississippi River. (Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer)



“All along Misi-ziibi (Mississippi) communities are seeing unprecedentedly low water levels. It's vital for everyone to see how critically low Misi-ziibi is to understand the impact this will have eventually at one's own faucet,” wrote the [Rights of Mississippi River](#) organization in a release ahead of the event Tuesday. “What happens upstream impacts the quality and availability of water for all those downstream, significantly with regard to our drinking water.”

## **Drought concerns**

In the minds of many was the recently issued permit issued June 4 by the Department of Natural Resources, allowing Enbridge to pump up to approximately 5 billion gallons -- almost 10 times as much as they originally requested -- for the remaining 145 miles of pipeline. Enbridge requested this amendment after winter and spring construction required significantly more dewatering than was anticipated, the DNR said.

In construction, dewatering is required for trenches, holes or roads that require digging below a certain depth, which are prone to filling with water. A permit is required from the Minnesota DNR for large dewatering projects involving more than 10,000 gallons per day or 1 million gallons per year.

According to the DNR website, “temporary dewatering of trenches for the Line 3 project is not expected to have any significant impact on nearby wetlands or other surface waters. Dewatering occurs at any single location for only a few days. The shallow water table in that area is temporarily lowered during dewatering operations. This water is then infiltrated back into the ground in close proximity to where it was removed, to help mitigate the temporary impact.”

There are concerns by opponents that this could negatively affect sensitive wetlands, lakes and streams along the route, which are already under stress due to the current statewide drought.



Hannah Jo King holds up her fist in solidarity with speakers at a Line 3 opposition event on Tuesday, July 20, 2021, at the Headwaters of the Mississippi River. (Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer)

“A dewatering permit increase recently approved by Minnesota’s DNR to allow Enbridge, a Canadian corporation building a Tar Sands pipeline within the Headwaters’ watershed, to remove almost 5 billion gallons of water, during drought no less, gave no voice to the Anishinaabeg as required by Treaties,” wrote the Rights of Mississippi River organization in the release.

“During pipeline construction, where the water table is high, sometimes we need to temporarily remove standing water from an open trench to ensure worker safety,” Enbridge communications specialist Juli Kellner told the Pioneer. “Water is pumped out of the trench, filtered, collected nearby and then gradually released back to the ground, per strict environmental permits and regulations.”

According to the DNR website, portions of this permit have been stalled due to the low water levels. Enbridge acknowledged the drought conditions and said the company is working to reduce water use at this time.

“Last week the Minnesota DNR suspended the use of some water sources due to low water flow in specific watersheds. We prepared for water restrictions to come into effect and have adjusted our work plans to protect and conserve water,” Kellner said.

“The current drought conditions in Minnesota are concerning to everyone. Our project permits include conditions that protect the environment during construction and specifically wild rice waters,” said Barry Simonson, director of Mainline Construction for Line 3. “We are focused on protecting and conserving water, and continue to work with agencies on next steps.”

Simonson added, “It’s worth noting that our pipelines have coexisted with some of the country’s most productive wild rice waters for seven decades.”

“This safety and maintenance-driven project is replacing an aging pipeline with a safer one made of thicker steel with more advanced coatings, which will help to protect Minnesota’s environment for generations to come,” Kellner said. “It is the most studied pipeline project in Minnesota history.”



Cloth signs dot the perimeter of the Headwaters of the Mississippi River during a Line 3 opposition event on Tuesday, July 20, 2021. (Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer)

## Related protests

Tuesday’s event took place a day [after a group of seven protesters was arrested](#), including Winona LaDuke, Executive Director of Honor the Earth, at Shell River, near Park Rapids. Another five were arrested on Tuesday at the same site.

LaDuke, Cheryl Barnds, Mary Klein, Kelly Maracle, Kristin Razowsky, Patricia Weber and Barbara With were booked into the Wadena County Jail on July 19, on charges of trespassing on critical public service facilities and refusing to leave upon demand, [according to the Wadena County Sheriff's in-custody list](#).

The 12 arrested are being held at the Wadena County Jail, pending formal charges from the Wadena County Attorney's Office.

According to Honor the Earth, the women were sitting at the river crossing "in peaceful prayer to oppose the construction of Line 3."

During the July 19 event itself, two more protestors were locked to horizontal drills near Shell River, as announced by the organization the Giniw Collective [Facebook page](#).

Nearly 600 protestors have been arrested in relation to the Line 3 pipeline replacement project since its inception.

Enbridge representatives said that the pipeline replacement project, which has been under construction in the state since December 2020, is now 70% completed.

"Replacement work is complete in Canada, North Dakota and Wisconsin. The project is on track to be complete and in service by quarter four of this year," Kellner said.

A live stream of the press conference is available on the [Rights of Mississippi River](#) Facebook page.



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Kendra Wolfe holds a sign that reads “Your vacation is in danger” during a Line 3 opposition event on Tuesday, July 20, 2021, at the Headwaters of the Mississippi River. (Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer)