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Contact: Anne Borgendale, Communications Director, CURE (Clean Up the River Environment), anne@cureriver.org | 320-269-2984



CURE applauds PUC decision to exert authority over hazardous CO₂ pipelines

St. Paul, MN, June 6, 2022 – In a recent decision, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) unanimously voted that it has existing authority over carbon dioxide (CO₂) pipelines. Summit Carbon Solutions and Navigator Ventures LLC each have proposed multi-state CO₂ pipeline projects that will cross Minnesota. As these pipelines will be transporting highly pressurized CO₂ in a hazardous state, the PUC will need to permit the routes. The PUC agreed with the positions of CURE (Clean Up the River Environment) and other organizational partners, Tribes, and labor unions—it's in the best interest of Minnesotans for the currently proposed or any future CO₂ pipelines to have state-level review and oversight.

The PUC took up the issue of CO₂ pipelines after CURE submitted petitions about the two current CO₂ pipeline projects to the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board in late 2021.

“We agree with the PUC that it has both the authority and the duty to the public to regulate where these pipelines will go,” said Peg Furshong, Programs Director for CURE. “There are communities, Tribes, and landowners who are in the pathway and impact zone of these proposed projects, and we deserve a process that sheds light on what these companies are doing and allows everyone who will be affected by them to have a say.”

The health and safety concerns of PEER (Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility) and other commenters resonated with the PUC as well. In their comments, PEER argued that existing law already covers these pipelines as a pressurized toxic gas. “We are very pleased that the Commission is putting human health and the environment first,” said Hudson Kingston, Litigation and Policy Attorney at PEER. “The fact that purified and highly pressurized carbon dioxide gas can explode out of pipelines and suffocate communities is more than enough reason for the PUC to immediately exercise authority over them.”

The PUC also made it clear that their decision to regulate these pipelines does not change the fact that they are private projects being built for private gain. “These companies are not public service companies,” said Commissioner John Tuma, “they don't have the authority to use eminent domain.”

To ensure consistency with State and Federal law and clarify the extent of their authority, the PUC will proceed with a rulemaking process. More information about the CO₂ pipeline rulemaking and opportunities for public comment will be forthcoming when the PUC issues its formal notice later this month.

More info

MNPUC Press Release: [Minnesota PUC confirms authority over CO₂ pipelines](#), 05/19/2022

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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