

Groups Protest Tar Sands Oil on Spill Anniversary

JOHN FLESHER, AP Environmental Writer

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. (AP) — On the second anniversary of the costliest onshore oil spill in U.S. history, environmental groups held rallies in several states Wednesday to raise concerns about transporting tar sands oil in underground pipelines.

Demonstrators walked along the riverfront in Battle Creek, near the southwestern Michigan site where a pipeline ruptured in 2010 and spewed hundreds of thousands of gallons of oil into the Kalamazoo River. Others staged "We Are the Kalamazoo" events in other states to rally opposition to new and expanded pipelines for carrying oil from sand deposits.

Tar sands are sand and rock that contain crude bitumen, a heavy form of crude oil.

"By taking a stand against tar sands, we are fighting for people's rights and health," said Susan Connolly, who participated in the Battle Creek walk and lives in Marshall, the town nearest the spill.

She said the spill — which spewed an estimated 843,000 gallons of crude in the river and a tributary creek — created fumes that gave her family nausea and headaches. The cleanup has cost so far a record \$800 million.

Organizers said events also were held in Oklahoma, Washington state, Nebraska, New York, Connecticut, Montana, Maine, Vermont and Delaware.

The pipeline, operated by Enbridge Inc., ruptured on July 25, 2010. Officials said 35 miles of waterways and wetlands were fouled and about 320 people reported symptoms from crude oil exposure.

The cleanup has reached its final stages and most of the river has been reopened for recreation.

An investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board determined that the rupture was caused by cracks and corrosion, and the agency faulted Enbridge for failing to perform excavations that might have prevented it. Federal regulators have proposed a \$3.7 million penalty against the Canadian company, which is based in Edmonton, Alberta.

Company officials have said some of the oil came from tar sands in the western Canada province of Alberta.

Environmentalists contend tar sands oil is more corrosive to pipes and harder to clean up than conventional oil, which Enbridge disputes. Experts with the National Academy of Sciences are studying the corrosion issue.

Groups Protest Tar Sands Oil on Spill Anniversary

Published on Chem.Info (<http://www.chem.info>)

The 286-mile-long pipeline extends from Griffith, Ind., to Sarnia, Ontario. Enbridge is replacing and enlarging the line, part of a \$2.6 billion project to boost the flow of oil to refineries in the eastern U.S. and Canada.

"The proliferation of tar sands pipeline projects only means more chances of toxic tar sands oil spills happening more frequently," said Anthony Swift, an attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Enbridge spokesman Graham White said the company has decades of experience transporting tar sands crude and "there is no evidence that internal corrosion is caused by transporting this product on well maintained and monitored pipelines."

He said Enbridge had made numerous improvements to its "operations, integrity, safety culture, emergency response and control center operations" since the Michigan spill.

Source URL (retrieved on 12/21/2014 - 10:34pm):

<http://www.chem.info/news/2012/07/groups-protest-tar-sands-oil-spill-anniversary>