

Editorial: Dig deeper into Enbridge pipeline with impact statement

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"Everybody is concerned about the safety of their communities, and Enbridge is, too. We definitely want to work with communities so they feel safe with the pipeline and understand that Enbridge is working to protect that community." —Becky Haase, Enbridge spokeswoman

Janesville Councilman Jim Farrell is right. The state Department of Natural Resources should back up and do an environmental impact statement on the Enbridge Line 61 pipeline that runs from Superior to Illinois, including a stretch near the Rock-Walworth county line.

Yes, it would cost more time and money than the environmental assessment done before Enbridge got a permit in 2006 and installed the line. As Jim Leute's in-depth report detailed in last Sunday's Gazette, the Rock County Board unanimously passed a resolution requesting an impact statement. Last month, however, Janesville's council voted 4-2 against such a measure out of concerns that it was largely symbolic.

"I don't think it's symbolic to ask government to do what should be done," Farrell told Leute. "Sometimes it takes a number of voices to get something done by government. Will it prompt the DNR to do something? Maybe not, but unless you make your views known, nothing will be done."

Reasonable enough. Though the line is buried, is it not reasonable to dig deeper into environmental risks given Enbridge's history? While this Canadian company claims an above-average safety record, consider:

— Enbridge paid \$1.1 million to settle DNR allegations of more than 100 environmental violations, including degrading wetlands, streams and private properties, during Line 61 construction.

— Enbridge's Wisconsin lines have ruptured at least five times since 2006, says activist Bruce Noble of Wisconsin Grassroots Pipeline.

— Enbridge was responsible for the largest inland oil spill in U.S. history, involving 1 million gallons, in 2010. That closed 35 miles of Michigan's Kalamazoo River and required dredging. Enbridge agreed to settle a lawsuit by paying \$6.8 million, The Associated Press reported in December.

Line 61 would carry 1.2 million barrels per day under Enbridge's plan. The controversial Keystone XL line would move only 860,000 barrels through our nation's midsection.

Enbridge says it has improved its practices since the Kalamazoo disaster. Area fire departments say the company routinely engages them in drills and has been great to work with. That's all good to hear.

While the environmental assessment gauges significant effects from a project, an impact statement would analyze and disclose those effects. The latter also affords more public comment.

Noble argues that Enbridge lacks transparency about its products and that people don't know the hazards spills could create. Even spokeswoman Becky Haase admits Enbridge carries 80 commodity types, depending on customer demands. That's a lot to know about without thorough analysis.

Some observers reason that Rock County was right to request the larger study because the pipeline runs through it, but they note the line is miles from Janesville. Line 61, however, is one of four in a group

crossing the Rock River near Lake Koshkonong. A spill could poison not just the river that runs through Janesville but area groundwater.

Pipelines seem safer than transporting petroleum by train or truck. A pipeline leak, however, would leave Wisconsinites wondering why the DNR wasn't proactive about an impact statement.

As Rock County Board Supervisor Rich Bostwick of Janesville told Leute: "An assessment is nowhere near as comprehensive as an impact statement, and without it, how do you know what could go wrong and therefore how to deal with it?"

How, indeed?

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