



CACC NEWS

JOHN AND CARRIE WALES
Center for Environmental and Social Justice

www.caccmi.org

WATER WATCH – FALL, 2021

- ***Nestlé's successor cuts back on withdrawal*** – In an effort to avoid the environmental scrutiny that comes with the permitted pumping of up to 400 gallons per minute (gpm), Blue Triton Brands has notified the State of Michigan that it will be pumping at 228 gpm. This decrease allows the company to avoid the monitoring requirements and use computer modeling instead of field measurements. The 228 gpm rate extrapolates into 414,720 gallons per day at full capacity. Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation, the group that has been contesting Nestlé's water withdrawals since the beginning, stated that they see this move as a total reset on the controversy. The new 228 gpm rate is higher than Nestle had been pumping the Osceola County wells, resulting in drying up of creeks that feed the Muskegon River. Although there is physical evidence, the courts have relied on Nestlé's computer models.
 - Garret Ellison, 10/20/2021, Nestle water owners return Michigan permit, plan new withdrawal - mlive.com
- ***Osceola County potash mine nears full approval*** – A proposed large potash and salt mining operation in Osceola County faces one more regulatory hurdle before it breaks ground in early 2022. Neighbors, however, have raised concerns about how the operation could impact air and water in the area. According to Michigan Potash and Salt, the company seeking the permits, the reserve of potash located about a mile-and-a-half underground in the central lower peninsula county could be worth more than \$65 billion. They have characterized this resource as one of the highest grade of any in North America. The company has proposed to produce about 650,000 tons of potash and a million pounds of food-grade salt per year in the initial stages, with expansion projected for the future. The resources will be extracted by solution mining, pumping huge quantities of water underground to dissolve the salt and potash, pump it to the surface to dry the brine to extract the solids, then returning the brine underground. In order to accomplish this, the company has obtained approval for eight brine production wells and three disposal wells despite objections from neighbors and environmentalists. If the State approves the permits, Michigan Potash will be able to extract 725 million gallons of groundwater annually, or about 2 million gallons per day. Ironically, more than five times the amount authorized by the former Nestle operations only a few miles away. The company also requires an air permit to enable the release of emissions not captured in dryer filters. The location of the facility is nearly 50 miles from the nearest air monitoring station.
 - Keith Matheny, Detroit Free Press, 09/05/2021 Mine for 'critical mineral' potash nears approval in Osceola County (freep.com)
- ***Clock keeps ticking on Line 5 Pipeline*** -- Oil spills, in and of themselves, are bad news. Bad for the environment, bad for business. The latest pipeline spill from a rupture in California shows us that given the opportunity to show how quickly the operator can respond, they blew it. The 140,000 gallon spill from the pipeline owned by Amplify Energy Corporation was likely caused by an anchor strike, causing a 13-inch gash in the pipe. *(continued on page 2)*

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- Although the company has leak detection system and a 24/7 staffed control room, the first reports came from another ship that noticed the oil sheen. Amplify did get a low pressure failure message, but didn't shut down the pipeline for 3 hours later, didn't notify the National Response Center for more than 6 hours, and the Coast Guard didn't start investigating until 12 hours after the first reports. All these are lessons to take to heart as Michigan and Enbridge litigate whether or not Line 5 should be shut down and oil routed through Canada instead of through the Straits of Mackinac. In the words of Georges Santayana, "Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it."
 - Traverse City Record Eagle editorial, 10/07/2021, excerpted with permission from the Lone Tree Council Leaf-let, October 2021.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR MONEY IN THE TIME OF COVID

While environmental concerns have not declined during Covid, CACC's ability to raise funds has. Our major fundraiser has now been cancelled TWICE. While so many of us feel the loss of the Wheatland Music Festival experience, the loss of income for CACC has been direct and impactful. CACC has continued to support various organizations* and efforts financially. Signing on to "calls for action," paying speakers for CACC's annual meeting (which in turn supports the organizations they are part of), and maintaining a newsletter to name a few financial commitments.

As CACC's current Chairperson, I am asking you to donate cash money. We need volunteer time too, there is a need for man-hours or should I say person-hours. But due to the cancellation of the festival, times 2, you can well imagine the financial impact it has had, so, please, look into your hearts and wallets and do what you/we can. Together we are stronger!

In service to the Earth,
Murry DeSanto, CACC Chairperson
and the CACC Board

**Some of the organizations and efforts CACC supports: Mecosta/Osceola County Water Protectors, Indigenous environmental efforts, F.L.O.W., Lone Tree Council, Shut Down Line 5, PFAS issues, Michigan Environmental Council.*

WHY IT'S SO HARD AND EXPENSIVE TO PLUG AN ABANDONED WELL

An oil or gas well is considered abandoned if it is no longer producing enough fuel to make money and no longer in operation. If the company that owned the well has gone bankrupt or there's no owner on record, the well is considered to be orphaned. Over time, the production of a well declines. When it's no longer viable, the well may be capped, which is a temporary measure. Not until it is sealed with cement to prevent the well from leaking toxins into the aquifer or the air is it considered to be "plugged," or closed.

Why worry? An estimated 2 million abandoned wells across the country are believed to be leaking toxic chemicals into aquifers and the air, including methane (a potent greenhouse gas) and benzene (a known carcinogen).

To properly close a well, the existing surface structures are removed, such as tanks and pump jacks. Then the well is checked for problems such as leaks, deteriorating casings, or cracked cement. Casings left alone for a significant period of time start to deteriorate, increasing the likelihood of leaks.

Next concrete is forced down the well, into the casing or well bore and between the casing and the outer layers. This is done under pressure to assure that all cavities are filled. The top of the well is then sealed and identifying markings added to ensure long term accountability. Finally, a record of the closing is filed with appropriate state and local authorities to ensure that water wells drilled in the vicinity are located a safe distance from the closed hydrocarbon well.

The process sounds pretty straight forward, but for orphaned wells, there may be no records to assist in determining the age, depth or construction of a well. In North Dakota, where some wells are drilled to 20,000 feet, it can cost \$150k to plug a single well and restore the land around it. In Pennsylvania, the state budgets about \$33k to plug each well. Many states require a bond for closure, but these are usually significantly less than the cost of plugging. And the US government only requires a \$2,000 bond for closure on federal lands. All this work takes time, money, and a commitment to protecting the environment. Not all companies, unfortunately, are willing to take this step. And many states are either unwilling to force companies to close abandoned wells or lack the resources to do so.

Associated Press via Yahoo News, Cathy Bussewitz, 07/29/2021 Why it's so hard and expensive to plug an abandoned well (yahoo.com)

Warrior for Justice Walks On

The environmental community has lost an irreplaceable, intrepid and tenacious hero. As CACC went to press, we received word that Bill Freese had died. Bill was the long-time Director of HEAL, Huron Environmental Activist League, in Alpena, Michigan. Bill also represented HEAL (a chapter of CACC) as a Director on the CACC Board. For decades, Bill, along with his wife Rose Mary and other dedicated citizens, kept after the internationally-based Lafarge Cement Company, (which became LafargeHolcim, and then, Holcim Group) to stop their blatant pollution of Great Lakes air and waters. Bill and HEAL teamed up with EarthJustice and others in the courts to win powerful victories for air quality. Bill was a phenomenal writer and speaker and he wrote hundreds of letters to elected officials on many critical environmental issues. Bill, we salute you for the difference that you made and the example you set for all of us! Rest well.



Great Lakes Facts

The Great Lakes contain six quadrillion gallons of water. That's a 6 followed by 24 zeroes!

The Great Lakes cover more area than New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire combined.

There are 30,000 islands in the Great Lakes
Lake Huron is the second largest Great Lake and the fifth largest freshwater lake in the world.

Manitoulin Island in Lake Huron is the largest freshwater island in the world.

It takes 22 years for the water in Lake Huron to be completely replaced. Lake Superior takes 200 years!
Georgian Bay in Lake Huron is large enough to be among the world's 20 largest lakes.

Courtesy of the Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association

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