

GREAT LAKES INDIAN FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION

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www.glifwc.org

• MEMBER TRIBES •

MICHIGAN

Bay Mills Community
Keweenaw Bay Community
Lac Vieux Desert Band

WISCONSIN

Bad River Band
Lac Courte Oreilles Band
Lac du Flambeau Band
Red Cliff Band
St. Croix Chippewa
Sokaogon Chippewa

MINNESOTA

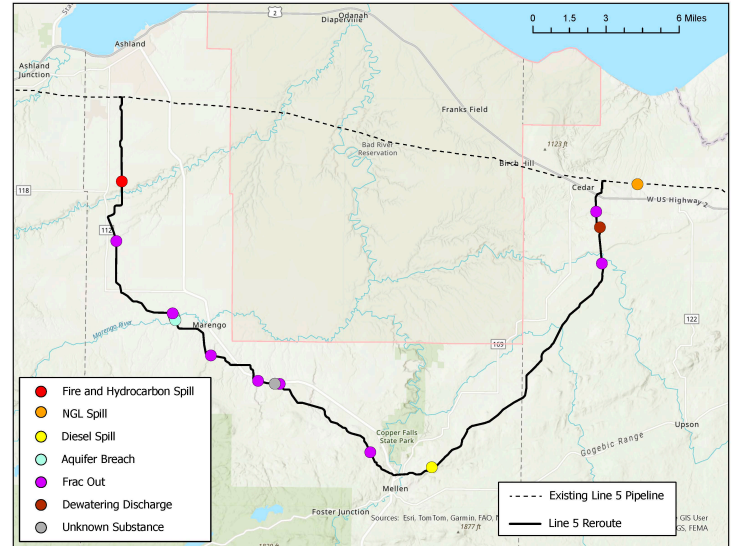
Fond du Lac Band
Mille Lacs Band



October 7, 2026

Multiple incidents on Enbridge Line 5 Reroute cause for environmental concerns in the Ceded Territory

GLIFWC calls upon State and Federal regulators to implement fines and rescind permit



(Pictured: Line 5 Reroute and map of incidents)

Last week, GLIFWC and its member Tribes were notified that Enbridge's Line 5 reroute crews breached an aquifer during the installation of a segment of pipeline in the Marengo River watershed. Aquifers are underground layers of sand, clay, gravel, and rock that hold and protect groundwater. Aquifer breaches can potentially impact clean ground water and disrupt local ecosystems and wetlands. This is just the latest in a series of recent adverse events along the reroute.

GLIFWC was notified in June 2026 of a horizontal directional drilling (HDD) frac-out in Iron County, which would be one of many frac-out incidents to occur since construction started. From June 27th to date, Enbridge has reported six spills of natural gas liquids, diesel, hydraulic fluid, or other hydrocarbons, ten frac-outs, and most recently, the aquifer breach, each occurring along the Line 5 reroute.

A frac-out is an inadvertent return where HDD is being performed under waterbodies. The process involves water injected drilling, which can allow water, drilling fluids and bentonite clay to escape from the drilling tube. HDD is not an ideal process, especially in areas near critical wetlands. The added sedimentation from the frac-outs is especially concerning to the Bad River Band, which maintains federally approved water quality standards on waters within its reservation.

GLIFWC and many of its member tribes have been vocal throughout the environmental review and permitting phases of the Line 5 reroute, and have even cited evidence backed data regarding the likelihood of frac-outs and aquifer breaches. GLIFWC Environmental Specialist Esteban Chiroboga acknowledged, “We absolutely pointed out the high probability of aquifer breaches based on the area’s geology and our experience from the Line 3 construction in Minnesota. Once a breach happens it’s very difficult to contain or to determine how long this water will flow to the surface. We might expect to see changes in water levels in downstream rivers and waterbodies if the flow continues for an extended period of time.”

Enbridge’s Line 3 construction in Minnesota breached four confirmed major aquifers and resulted in millions of gallons of ground water wasted. Enbridge was subsequently fined by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and reportedly agreed to pay \$13.8 million in fines, settlements, and related project costs. GLIFWC Executive Administrator Jason Schlender raises concerns about the recent and ongoing incidents along line 5.

“It seems like everyday there are new incidents occurring, which have real life implications for our communities and the water and resources we all depend upon. The WDNR’s enforcement capacity is raising concerns as Enbridge and its sub-contractors have not complied with WDNR requests to halt construction activities related to the bypass, nor have they complied with Line 5 reroute permit conditions. We strongly urge both State and Federal regulators to protect our communities and these resources- upholding their treaty obligations.”

In August 2026, Enbridge’s existing Line 5 ruptured, leaking approximately 31,000 barrels of natural gas liquids. Enbridge began constructing a bypass in September 2026 around the ruptured section of pipe without any required WDNR permits. WDNR issued a non-compliance on September 9th yet Enbridge finished the bypass construction without any permits or authorization. To date, there hasn’t been any announcement of fines or actions taken against Enbridge related to the Line 5 reroute permit violations or existing Line 5 non-compliance.

GLIFWC remains committed to keeping its members Tribes and the general public informed of Ceded Territory activities and actions that may negatively impact treaty rights and treaty protected resources. Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) is an intertribal treaty organization comprised of eleven Ojibwe tribes located in present day Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan who reserved hunting, fishing, and gathering rights in the 1836, 1842, and 1854 Treaties with the United States government. To learn more about GLIFWC visit <https://glifwc.org>

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