THE PROBLEM

The Canadian oil company, Enbridge, is proposing the expansion of two oil pipelines through Northern Minnesota, threatening our pristine lakes and violating treaty rights. The Line 3 pipeline would carry tar sands oil which is far more destructive than conventional oil, being about 20% more carbon polluting on a lifecycle basis than the average oil in the United States.1 Further, the pipelines will cross through treaty protected Native lands. If built, these pipelines would risk Minnesota land, lakes, rivers, and streams, including the headwaters of the Mississippi river, would violate vital treaty rights, and would lock Minnesota in to decades more fossil fuel transport, exacerbating climate change.

THE RISKS OF LINE 3 AND SANDPIPER

These pipelines would carry tar sands oil and fracked oil through Minnesota, risking environmental harm and impacting public health. The proposed Sandpiper line would move fracked oil from the Bakken fields in North Dakota, a dirty and harmful oil production process that releases methane, a greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change, along with volatile organic compounds, toxic chemicals which are harmful to air quality and public health.2 The second proposed line, Line 3, is proposed as a replacement pipeline for an old, corroded, and failing line and would carry carbon-indulgent tar sands oil. The current Line 3 would then be abandoned and without adequate safety precautions, could leak into the ground and would become the state’s problem to clean up, even though Enbridge made a profit from it for decades.

The National Academy of Sciences reports that the harmful heavy diluted bitumen, a primary element of tar sands oil, is nearly impossible to clean up when it spills, and Enbridge has been responsible for 763 spills since 2005.3 These spills, including the largest inland pipeline disaster in the United States, have devastated local waterways, displaced homeowners, and have raised health concerns. Oil pipelines corrode and break, no oil company can deny this fact. With these oil pipelines crossing Minnesota farmland, wetlands, and lake country comes a nearly assured environmental and public health disaster.

VIOLATED TREATY RIGHTS

Line 3 and Sandpiper pipelines would damage wild rice waters, an important food and income source and a critical cultural aspect of local tribes. The proposed pipelines would violate treaty rights by harming resources protected in the 1854, 1855, and 1867 Treaty areas. Studies have confirmed that tribal communities already have significant health disparities compared to other communities in Ohio.
the state, and these pipelines could lead to further health issues in the case of a tar sands or oil spill that contaminates water and devastates wild rice harvests. We must respect and uphold treaty rights that have been broken time and time again throughout Minnesota’s history.

SOLUTION
We do not need more oil. And we do not need to lock Minnesota in to decades more of transporting oil through our state. It is time to start planning our clean energy transition. Oil demand is down by 30% in Minnesota, and the production of fracked oil is decreasing.4 Citizens across the state of Minnesota are standing up and taking action to show that we don’t support the building of Line 3 and Sandpiper. By taking action, we can ensure cleaner waters and a healthier community for years to come.

The Public Utilities Commission is beginning their Environmental Impact Statement process. They need to hear a clear message from our state leaders that pipeline abandonment and proposed new lines deserve intense scrutiny.

Support our climate and support Minnesota Tribes by working with us against dirty pipelines in our state. Tell Governor Dayton we want water, not oil, in our treasured lakes and streams.

ENDNOTES
3 National Academies of Science, Committee on the Effects of Diluted Bitumen on the Environment Board on Chemical Sciences and Technology, Division on Earth and Life Studies, Spills of Diluted Bitumen from Pipelines: A Comparative Study of Environmental Fate, Effects, and Response. 2015.