



PRESS RELEASE

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THE GRAND TRAVERSE BAND OF OTTAWA AND CHIPPEWA INDIANS CONDEMNS STATE'S BETRAYAL ON LINE 5 PERMIT; VOWS AGGRESSIVE LEGAL AND PUBLIC MOBILIZATION

PESHAWBESTOWN, MI — The Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians (GTBOCI) expresses its profound disappointment and utter condemnation of the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy's (EGLE) reckless decision to issue permits for the Line 5 tunnel project.

This administrative action represents a bad-faith betrayal of the Tribal-State relationship. During consecutive Tribal-State Summits, GTBOCI leadership met face-to-face with Governor Gretchen Whitmer and EGLE staff to explicitly, repeatedly communicate our absolute, non-negotiable opposition to Line 5. By ignoring these formal consultations, the State of Michigan has demonstrated a continuing historical disregard for tribal sovereignty, choosing corporate fossil-fuel interests over its explicit pledges to Indigenous nations; choosing money over people.

GTBOCI views this permitting decision as a catastrophic regulatory failure. In conjunction with other allied tribes and a mobilized coalition of citizens, the Grand Traverse Band will aggressively deploy every legal, regulatory, and public advocacy weapon at our disposal to halt this project. We will not allow the state to gamble with the ecological integrity of the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes are a public trust to all citizens of Michigan and a specific Treaty Trust to Tribes.

Our unyielding opposition is rooted in two critical, non-negotiable areas:

1. Material Breach of Treaty-Protected Rights and Sovereign Duty

- **Violation of Supreme Law:** The 1836 Treaty of Washington guarantees our perpetual right to fish in the waters of the Great Lakes. Under Article VI of the U.S. Constitution, this treaty is the supreme law of the land, which the State of Michigan has no legal authority to infringe upon or compromise.
- **Evisceration of Resource Rights:** Usufructuary treaty rights are rendered meaningless if the state permits the systematic degradation and destruction of the aquatic ecosystems that support the fisheries.
- **Abrogated Legal Obligation:** The State of Michigan holds a strict, binding public trust doctrine responsibility to protect these shared waters. By permitting high-risk fossil fuel infrastructure, the state has actively breached its legal duty to its tribal counterparts and the public.

2. Unacceptable Environmental, Economic, and Existential Risk

- **Imminent Catastrophic Spill Threat:** A breach or spill in the Straits of Mackinac poses an immediate, existential threat to the drinking water, shorelines, and wildlife of the entire Great Lakes basin.
- **Devastating Economic Ruin:** A potential oil spill carries an unacceptable cost for Tribal Citizens and Michigan citizens alike, threatening billions of dollars in tourism, commercial fishing, municipal water systems, and local economies.
- **Absence of Necessity:** Risking the world's largest surface freshwater system is entirely unnecessary when proven, safer, and legally compliant energy transportation alternatives already exist.

A Call to Public Resistance

The Grand Traverse Band stands united with the Bay Mills Indian Community in its leadership opposition to Line 5. We call upon all citizens of Michigan, environmental advocates, and allied organizations to join us in active, public resistance against this dangerous expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure. If the State of Michigan refuses to honor its constitutional duties and protect its people, we will fight in the courts, we will fight in the regulatory arenas, and we will fight in the court of public opinion to protect our sacred waters for the next seven generations.