

Line 3 Aquifer Breach in Clearbrook

Enbridge's unpermitted Line 3 construction practices breached an artesian aquifer in January, causing uncontrolled water loss and jeopardizing rare ecosystems. The company didn't tell state regulators until June 15, a few days after it received an amended dewatering permit from the DNR increasing its appropriation of groundwater during an extreme drought to 5.5 billion gallons. The aquifer is still losing over 100,000 gallons a day.

Quick Facts about the Aquifer Breach

1. **On January 21, 2021, Enbridge disregarded approved and permitted construction plans, dug deep instead of digging shallow, and breached an artesian aquifer near Clearbrook, Minnesota.** The breach immediately created quicksand-like conditions at the surface of the construction area and uncontrolled water flow out of the aquifer.
2. **To avoid a Stop Work Order and construction delays, Enbridge didn't tell state regulators or environmental monitors about the breach.** It opted to continue construction of the oil pipeline and address damage to the aquifer later. That damage has not yet been fixed. Enbridge did not and still does not have a permit for uncontrolled flow of water.
3. **To enable continued construction of the pipeline despite the uncontrolled water flow, Enbridge inserted metal sheet pilings that created a second breach of the aquifer.**
4. **Uncontrolled flow from the aquifer continues today at a rate of over 100,000 gallons a day. Over 25 million gallons have been lost so far.**
5. **Enbridge breached the aquifer because it disregarded its permitted construction plans when it encountered an obstacle** (another oil pipeline not reflected in its plans), digging at a depth of 18 feet instead of the approved 8 feet. This is a violation of the permit and state law. This catastrophe was completely preventable.
6. **The breach has likely caused not only loss of precious water resources but enduring damage to rare and sensitive calcareous fens ecosystems** that are supported by upwelling water from the aquifer. Damage to these may not be apparent for several years. In November, the DNR expressly issued a "No Effect Concurrence" for this construction plan in order that construction would not impact the aquifer which supports the calcareous fens.
7. In its Restoration and Replacement Order, the DNR told Enbridge it must verify over the entire length of the line whether other deviations from permitted construction plans have caused harm by December 1.