

Tribes oppose tunnel under Straits of Mackinac

SAULT STE. MARIE — In a unanimous decision, the Native American tribes that make up the Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority (CORA) have voiced their opposition to the concept of a new tunnel under the Straits of Mackinac and renewed their plea to Governor Snyder and Attorney General Schuette to immediately decommission Enbridge Line 5.

The proposal to replace the section of oil pipeline in the Straits with a tunnel comes from what CORA believes to be a highly flawed alternatives analysis recently released by the state's Pipeline Safety Advisory Board.

"It's obvious to CORA that the focus of the alternatives analysis report was not to find solutions that were in the best of interest of Michigan but to allow Enbridge to continue pumping oil to Canadian refineries through a route that endangers our most productive fishing grounds," CORA Executive Director Jane TenEyck said.

The 64-year-old pipeline snakes its way through the heart of the CORA tribes' ceded territories and through waters that the United States and Michigan have promised to protect. The Straits of Mackinac are the most productive waters in the treaty reserved fishery, producing over half of the tribes' commercial fish harvest. A rupture in the pipeline would be catastrophic for the future of that fishery. It will also devastate the public's 20 million angler days spent every year fishing on the Great Lakes.

The CORA resolution points out that a tunnel beneath the Straits would not prevent the threat of an oil spill and that scoping for a tunnel would greatly extend the risk of a catastrophic oil spill into the future.

"This alternative to buy time though the ludicrous idea to build a new tunnel is a stall tactic through the end of the Snyder Administration and through 2018 gubernatorial campaigns," CORA Chair Aaron Payment said.

Payment added, "With the decline of environmental concerns and the threat underwater pipelines, the recent spill at the Keystone Pipeline and ongoing spills by Enbridge it is just a matter of time and we will no longer be able to call Pure Michigan Pure."