

Sierra Club Illinois Statement In Response To The Oil Spill In Edwardsville

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EDWARDSVILLE – Following reports of a 165,000-gallon crude oil spill affecting Cahokia Creek, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) has referred an enforcement action against Marathon Pipe Line LLC (Marathon) to the Illinois Attorney General's office.

Sierra Club supports the decision of the IEPA, and the commitment of Attorney General Raoul to ensure that Marathon remediates the spill. In addition to immediate cleanup response, Sierra Club urges the Attorney General's office to hold Marathon responsible for identifying the cause of the spill, and for investigating and remedying the long-term effects that the spillage of crude oil in groundwater and soil may have on the health and safety of the community, environment, and Cahokia Creek.

The Marathon Pipe Line leak was first reported the morning of Friday, March 11, when residents identified the strong odor of crude oil. The leak began in Edwardsville near IL-143 & Old Alton Edwardsville Road, and entered Cahokia Creek leaving residents and Sierra Club members concerned about the effects the spill would have on their health and safety and the surrounding wildlife. Many local residents enjoy the Madison County Transit bike and pedestrian trail that runs adjacent to Cahokia Creek at the site of the spill. With countless unanswered questions and the spread and impact of the spill still being identified, Sierra Club stands with the community in demanding answers and action from Marathon.

In response to the Marathon oil spill, Sierra Club Illinois released the following statement:

"This disastrous spill in Cahokia Creek is yet another reminder that it's never a question of whether a pipeline will spill, but when," says Jack Darin, Sierra Club Illinois Chapter Director. "Illinois is at risk from thousands of miles of similar pipelines pumping fossil fuels through our communities. We are glad to see Illinois regulators take swift action to contain this spill and determine its cause. We urge them to hold Marathon fully accountable for the damage they've done to our local natural resources, and take all necessary steps to protect area residents and workers involved in the emergency response."

"I find this disaster an imminent threat to our community," says Toni Opelt, local Edwardsville Resident and Sierra Club Member. "Cahokia Creek flows under a stretch of the popular MCT bike trails and adjacent to a watershed preserve that is home to myriad wildlife and waterfowl. The creek has been a recreation area for young people, especially since the pandemic and the closure of the Edwardsville Community Pool. Summer is just ahead, and I'm sure young people will return to the creek to swim and wade. And I understand: I can remember such good times from my own youth. It would never have occurred to me then and probably doesn't occur to them now, that the water lapping their legs and soil beneath their feet are toxic."

Sierra Club

The Sierra Club is America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with millions of members and supporters. In addition to protecting every person's right to get outdoors and access the healing power of nature, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit www.sierraclub.org.