



Farmer asks county's help to protest farm pipeline route

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by [Laura Adelman](#)

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A Farmington resident is asking Dakota County commissioners to support her opposition to the MinnCan crude oil pipeline from being buried under her organic kale field.

After hearing Anita Diffley, co-owner of Gardens of Eagan Organic Farm during a May 9 committee meeting, commissioners tentatively agreed to support her quest in petitioning the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to realign the pipeline off her farm on Highview Avenue in Eureka Township and onto neighboring property.

Commissioners asked staff to provide information as to how a such a resolution could impact other properties and municipalities before they decide on the resolution at their May 23 meeting.

Planned by the Minnesota Pipe Line Company, the crude oil pipeline is proposed through Rosemount, and several townships including Empire, Castle Rock and Eureka. It is needed, says the company, to accommodate oil production from Canada.

According to the company's Web site, proven oil reserves in Canada are expected to increase to over 1 million barrels per day, and the current system is at capacity, unable to transport the additional crude oil volumes to Minnesota's refineries.

The route is favored, according to the company, because it avoids as many homes and farmsteads as possible, minimizes impact to environmentally sensitive areas like lakes and wetlands, and makes the route as short as possible to minimize inconvenience to residents, businesses and communities.

But Diffley explained the route should avoid her farm because she is an organic farmer dependent, not on chemicals, but on soil health to producing crops.

"Soil health is how we produce a healthy plant, how we control our diseases ... and pests," she said.

The MinnCan project, she said would destroy the soil base and "would not be reparable" after a pipeline was buried beneath the ground.

"You can't just put an organic farm anywhere. ... There's a lot of considerations that go into choosing land for an organic farm. You have to look at how it's affected by joint properties," she said, adding that the pipeline's installation would put her farm's organic certification in jeopardy.

While the pipeline would bring resources necessary for creating fuel, Diffley said organic farming avoids using petroleum products to produce crops.

Other farmers, Diffley said, use gasoline-powered equipment to grow crops, and then deliver them, but she said her farm operates without fuel and because products are shipped locally, minimizes fuel usage.

"An organic farm that ships its food locally really should be a model, not a casualty of Minnesota's energy policies," she said, quoting Barth Anderson, author of the book "Patron Saint of Plagues."

Diffley was a vocal supporter of the county's implementation of the Farmland and Natural Areas project, and she quoted some of the county's adopted goals of preserving open space during her presentation to encourage county support.

In addition, Diffley said that her farm averages \$20,000 gross per acre versus soybeans, which average \$269 per acre.

"I'm giving you those numbers, not because I'm worried about the money, but I want you to recognize how much food is coming off of a very small piece of property."

Last year, she said her farm shipped over 30 semi-trailers filled with produce into the Twin Cities.

"That's 30 semis of produce that didn't come from far away using petroleum," Diffley said.

"What types of farm do we want to preserve in Dakota County for future generation's food sources?" she asked.

Diffley has established a live journal online (<http://atinagoe.livejournal.com>) and Web page (www.frontiernet.net/~atinagoe/) complete with a campaign to send letters to help her fight the "huge crude oil pipeline" planned to cross her farm.

In her journal, Diffley writes passionately about her farm and the frustration she feels regarding the pipeline.

She wrote, "After a phone call to MinnCan and being treated in a condescending and intimidating manner my wrath is fully evoked. The wrath Jeffrey experienced was fresh raspberries in comparison to what I have building up for this pipeline which has no respect for soil health and organic produce."

Diffley stated on her Web site that she has hired an attorney.

After public hearings, the PUC will determine the pipeline route.

"Any recommendations from you," Diffley told commissioners, "are very helpful in that route selection process."

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