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**Threat to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) by Special Interests**

More and more attention is being drawn to widespread environmental degradation occurring in the wake of the rapid development of domestic oil and natural gas resources and the continent-wide pipeline projects proposed to transport these fossil fuels. Concurrently the League has become increasingly concerned for the steady erosion of the seminal environmental laws and programs intended to protect the human and natural environment from short and long-term impacts of this industry.

With the passage of the NEPA in 2005 the oil and gas industry was exempted from the most important provisions of our nation's environmental protection laws. In an October 2007 report by the Oil & Gas Accountability Project, a project of the Earthworks (see attached) the following statement can be found:

*“The oil and gas industry enjoys sweeping exemptions from provisions in the major federal environmental statutes intended to protect human health and the environment. These statutes include the:*

- *Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act*
- *Resource Conservation and Recovery Act*
- *Safe Drinking Water Act*
- *Clean Water Act*
- *Clean Air Act*
- *National Environmental Policy Act*
- *Toxic Release Inventory under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act*

*This lack of regulatory oversight can be traced to many illnesses and even deaths for people and wildlife across the country. There are a variety of chemicals used during the many phases of oil and gas development. These chemicals also produce varying types of waste throughout these processes. Because of the exemptions and exclusions, toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes are permeating the soil, water sources and the air threatening human health to an alarming extent.”*

The League has recently learned that the oil and gas lobby has successfully weakened similar environmental laws and procedures at the levels of state and local government creating legal loopholes and expedited procedures that circumvent proper environmental review of these projects especially for crude oil pipelines. For example, Minnesota's stellar environmental protection network is currently threatened by this systematic dismemberment of both statute and rule. In Minnesota and other states pipeline projects have been afforded a “streamlined” detour around applicable rules and procedure that has made a mockery of proper review and permitting.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Izaak Walton League of America join with other citizen and Tribal groups calling for repeal of all statutory exemptions from environmental laws extended to the oil and gas industry in the 2005 National Energy Policy Act. And the League joins citizen and Tribal groups working to restore the integrity of the environmental review and permitting of all pipeline projects at the state and local level.

*by Willis Mattison*

*Submitted by the Prairie Woods Chapter*