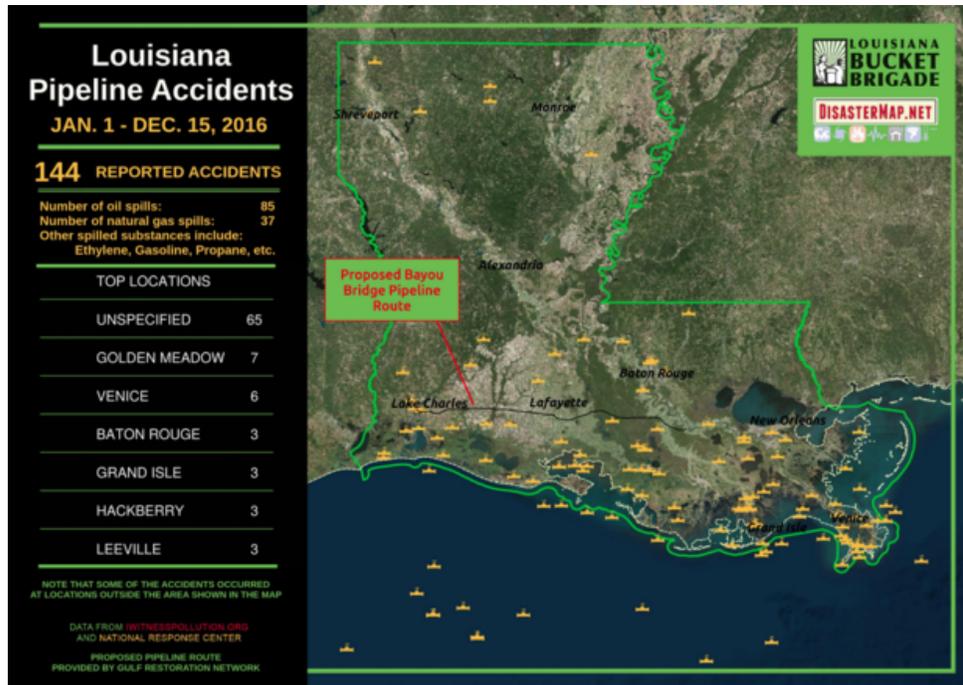


Greater New Orlear

# No more pipelines, Louisiana environmental group says, citing 144 accidents



A map shows the approximate locations of the 144 petrochemical incidents in Louisiana in 2016 that were reported to the U.S. Coast Guard's National Response Center. (Image courtesy Louisiana Bucket Brigade/DisasterMap.net)



By **JR Ball, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune**

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Citing "catastrophic" problems in Louisiana's oil and gas infrastructure, the head of a New Orleans-based environmental health and justice organization said Tuesday (Jan. 10) that the state should not approve any more pipelines, including the proposed \$670 million **Bayou Bridge pipeline**. The comments from Anne Rolfes, founding director of the **Louisiana Bucket Brigade**, came in conjunction with a **new report** showing 144 pipeline accidents in the state in 2016.

The Louisiana Bucket Brigade and the mapping website DisasterMap.net published the report from the U.S. Coast Guard's National Response Center data. Most of the leaks, the report says, resulted of corrosion or holes in the pipelines. The authors said the release of oil, gas and chemicals not only poses health risks but also accelerates coastal erosion and contributes to global warming.

"There is no pipeline in Louisiana that is safe," geographer Ezra Boyd of DisasterMap.net said during a conference call with reporters.

- *Zoom on this map, click on markers for information:*

Gifford Briggs, vice president of the **Louisiana Oil and Gas Association**, has a decidedly different view. He said pipelines are a safer and more efficient way to transport oil and gas than trains, barges and trucks. He said companies have not only gotten better about reporting accidents but also have a financial incentive to fix problems.

"Fifty percent of the fuel that powers this nation comes through that pipeline," he said. "Pipelines are a part of life in an energy-producing state and, yes, we need to make sure we're operating in the safest way possible."

The analysis of the accidents along the almost 50,000 miles of pipeline in Louisiana comes two days before the state Department of Environmental Quality holds a public hearing on the controversial Bayou Bridge pipeline, a planned 162-mile oil pipeline that would cut through the Atchafalaya Basin and 11 parishes, beginning in **Calcasieu** and ending at an oil terminal in **St. James**. The public hearing is scheduled Thursday at 6 p.m. in the Oliver Pollock Room of the Galvez Building in Baton Rouge. If built, the pipeline would link refineries in the state to a major Texas hub that connects to larger pipelines across the country.

"Often these meetings are held to satisfy critics but there's really no impact," Rolfes said. "I promise voices will be heard this time."

The Bucket Brigade, along with the Louisiana chapter of the Sierra Club, the Gulf Restoration Network, the Atchafalaya Basinkeeper and other environmental and conservation groups, have asked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to deny the federal permit necessary to build the pipeline.

Three companies are involved in the proposed joint venture project -- subsidiaries of Phillips 66, Sunoco Logistics and Energy Transfer Partners -- and each also has an interest in the controversial Dakota Access pipeline, which spurred protests in North Dakota. In fact, a key motivator for building the Bayou Bridge pipeline is to move oil efficiently from North Dakota's Bakken Formation to refineries in Louisiana. Right now, much of that oil has moved by rail and barge, initially to Port **Manchac** in **Tangipahoa Parish** and then across **Lake Ponchartrain** to the Phillips 66 refinery at **Alliance**, in **Plaquemines Parish**.

"Louisiana has a catastrophic pipeline infrastructure already in place and we can't adequately maintain and protect what we already have," said Rolfes. "There should be no more pipelines."



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Briggs, the industry official, acknowledged that the vast network of pipelines in Louisiana requires maintenance and repair. But that's no different than other infrastructure systems, he said.

"You see it with our roads," he said. "It's no different than owning a home; You have to maintain it because there will on occasion be problems. If you have a leaking facet in your house does that mean you should stop building homes?"

Rolfes agreed "with the premise" that the petrochemical industry has a financial interest in maintaining its pipelines. But she wondered whether it's happening. "When does all this get fixed," she asked. "Do these things actually get fixed? The number of incidents and the damage that's being caused as a result does cast doubt."

Of the 144 accidents reported last year, according to the new report, 85 involved oil and 37 involved natural gas. The other spilled substances included ethylene, gasoline and propane. As troubling to Rolfes was that 65 of the incidents occurred at "unspecified" locations, according to research of industry-field accident documents.

Briggs said the petrochemical industry is operating in the "safest way possible" -- and is vitally important to Louisiana's economy. He said much of the criticism of the industry comes from groups that want to see fossil fuels eliminated as a global energy source.

"You can do that, but be prepared to live in a world with no plastics, no computers and no cars just to start the list," Briggs said. "It's hard to find a product we use in our daily lives that isn't derived from the oil and gas industry."

"The oil industry pretty consistently talks about its economic impact," Rolfes countered. "But what it doesn't talk about is the negative impact it has on our waterways, our coast, our environment and on the economic health of many small businesses hurt as a result of these leaks and other problems within the industry."

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