



Credible.
Independent.
In the public interest.

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information contact:

Bill Caram
Executive Director
bill@pstrust.org
360-543-5686

Pipeline Safety Trust Welcomes New Rule to Strengthen Protections for Coastal Waters, Great Lakes

BELLINGHAM, Washington [December 16, 2021] – The Pipeline Safety Trust (PST) is pleased that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) has taken action on protecting our coastal waters and Great Lakes shorelines from hazardous liquid pipelines adjacent to these pristine wild spaces. The agency announced adoption of an interim final rule expanding application of an important set of pipeline rules to an additional 3,000 miles of pipelines carrying oil, refined petroleum products, and other hazardous liquids.

The new rule from PHMSA now deems coastal beaches, coastal marine waters and the Great Lakes as *Unusually Sensitive Areas*, and designates them as High Consequence Areas (HCAs), extending application of additional safety regulations and assessment requirements to additional miles of hazardous liquid pipelines in coastal areas.

The original definition of an Unusually Sensitive Area left out large swaths of coastal areas and Great Lakes shorelines, meaning that the stronger protections provided by the integrity management programs did not apply to pipelines affecting these areas.

“While this is an important improvement in pipeline regulation and provides important protections for many critical areas not previously covered, it is not a panacea,” Pipeline Safety Trust Program Director Rebecca Craven said.

Craven points out that the proposal from PHMSA confirms that the integrity management program rules already applied to the Amplify Energy line and to the Plains Pipeline that failed

due to corrosion in Santa Barbara County in 2015. The Plains Pipeline incident was a disaster and released 123,000 gallons of heavy crude oil into the ocean and contaminated over 3,000 acres of critical habitat. “These spills provide vivid examples of how spills still happen despite the additional safety requirements and can cause tremendous damage to coastlines, beaches and waters,” Craven said.

“Pipeline operators must increase the vigilance with which they operate their lines and PHMSA must sharpen their inspection and enforcement efforts on operators who fail to do so,” Craven said.

In the PIPES Acts of 2016 and 2020, Congress directed PHMSA to fix this flaw in their rules and extend protections of the integrity management programs to all coastal areas and Great Lakes shorelines. This rule fulfills that congressional directive and should help prevent more catastrophic spills that damage our shorelines and beaches, near-shore marine environments and the waters of the Great Lakes, one of the most important fresh water environments on the planet.