



SOUTHERN UTE INDIAN TRIBE

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Senator Jessie Danielson Calls for Full Investigation of Major Gasoline Spill in La Plata County



Southern Ute Indian Reservation - On Wednesday, May 13, Senator Jessie Danielson (CO Senate District 22) delivered a Tribute on the State Senate floor, calling on the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) and the Attorney General to fully investigate and address the spill of refined gasoline from a 40-year-old pipeline operated by Houston, TX-based Enterprise Products (Enterprise). Senator Danielson further expressed appreciation to the Southern Ute Indian Tribe (Tribe) for its leadership in monitoring and responding to the ongoing environmental impacts of the spill and all measures taken to ensure the safety of Coloradoans. The Tribute was signed by Senate President James Coleman and received unanimous bipartisan approval by the Senate.

The Enterprise spill, which was first identified in December 2024, occurred on private fee land in the exterior boundaries of the Southern Ute Indian Reservation near the Animas River. Today, Enterprise estimates the spill to be 97,000 gallons, while other estimates determined that the spill was substantially greater. It is the largest spill of refined gasoline in the state and one of the largest nationwide.

During her remarks, Senator Danielson described how Enterprise “dramatically understated the scale of the disaster and engaged in no earnest remediation” of the groundwater. She also expressed concerns regarding CDPHE, which initially had jurisdiction over the spill since it occurred on private land, stating the agency “failed to address the significant health concerns and threats to the environment.” Due to lack of confidence in the State, the Tribe launched its own investigation and response utilizing Tribal resources.

Enterprise’s leak detection system failed to detect the spill. Instead, the pipeline failure was first identified by a landowner on the Reservation who saw “a small river of gasoline” flowing across a nearby road.¹ In early January

¹ Schafir, R.M., *Details scant as operators remains tight-lipped about pipeline failure south of Durango*. Durango Herald.

Thursday, February 20, 2025 (Updated Friday, February 21, 2025).

2025, Enterprise reported the size of the spill to be approximately 16,000 gallons. Later that month, the estimate was revised to 23,000 gallons. CDPHE never questioned that estimate, never performed an independent analysis of the spill, and never visited the site of the spill until April 30, 2025, five months after it occurred.

The Tribe, after performing its own analysis of the spill and remediation efforts, challenged Enterprise's initial spill estimate. Seven months later, in August 2025, Enterprise was forced to acknowledge that its estimate of inventory losses was in error and that approximately 97,000 gallons of refined gasoline spilled into the surrounding areas, including into the groundwater. The Tribe continues to challenge Enterprise's current estimate, its own analysis showing the spill to be in excess of 200,000 gallons.

Due to prolonged underreporting and miscalculations, significant groundwater remediation efforts were not commenced by Enterprise until June 2025, six months after the spill was identified. As a consequence, the gasoline plume migrated through the groundwater, is now $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile south of the initial release point, has been identified within three-tenths of a mile of the Animas River, and has contaminated over 110 acres of the drinking water aquifer. The Tribe estimates that the plume is migrating approximately 10 feet per day. With no public water system in the area, Reservation residents have lost their homes due to contamination of their drinking water wells. Other landowners are at risk of losing their homes as the plume continues to migrate.

Senator Danielson expressed concern that the State has not "given the attention to this disaster as it should" and she urged CDPHE and Governor Jared Polis to address this issue as "people's lives are on the line." Chairman Melvin J. Baker agreed stating, "when the State of Colorado failed to act, it was important that the Tribe do so...our land and waters are sacred. The Tribe has historically been the protectors of the land and we, once again, have been called on to do so. We must ensure that the gasoline contamination is remediated quickly, that our natural and cultural resources are protected, and that our members and community residents are safe."

Governor Polis has only briefly mentioned this environmental disaster publicly once. He has never discussed its severity, expressed concern for its impact on the environment or the welfare of those affected by it, or visited the site. The Southern Ute Indian Tribe, as the original stewards and caretakers, express deep appreciation to Senator Danielson and the Colorado Senate for insisting on an immediate, comprehensive intervention to stop the spread of the contamination, protect human health and the environment, and ensure no additional families are displaced from their homes.

To view the Tribute recording beginning at 10:28 AM, please visit the link or scan the QR code below:



Bitly Link: <http://bit.ly/4wts6ar>

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