Copetown to Westover: Pipeline Observations by Louisette Lanteigne

On August 4, 2016 I drove to Copetown Ontario in Hamilton to witness pipelines in the area of Line 10 to understand the geology, the land uses around it and the maintenance of signs and above ground features related to pipelines.

The area I examined is the route of various high pressure oil pipelines like Line 7, Line 10 and 11 as well as high pressure gas lines owned by Trans Canada sharing the same Right of Way in places.

The signs I observed did not mention terms like Line 7, Line 10 or Line 11 but it did refer to terms such as Sarnia Products Pipeline and Enbridge.

Photo 1: This is located off Governors Road just west of the intersection with HWY 52 along the Hydro Corridor. First off, the geology of the area is hummocky rolling hills characteristic of Paris Galt Moraine System.

At this point as seen in the photo, there is a high pressure oil pipeline with signage identifying “Sarnia Products Pipeline” as the company responsible for this pipe. The oil line is extremely close to two TransCanada high pressure natural gas lines. The three metallic boxes as photographed are all located within a 5-6 foot width. They are extremely close together.

Photo 2: There was another high pressure gas line just meters away from pipelines shown in Photo 1. This is all within the same Hydro Corridor along Governors Road. In this photo it shows wires and nuts exposed. There is no cap to be found near this device. I called the Ontario Spills Action Centre about this and they helped to connect me to an agency who could remedy this situation. My report is filed with the MOE case file 0864-ACHLEQ.

Photo 3: Phragmites are an invasive plant that are showing up in wetlands and roadside ditches throughout Ontario. Photo 3 shows what signage areas looked like when I arrived to the Hydro Corridor by Governors Road. This area sits directly across the street from where I observed the gas and oil lines. (North side of the street) The depth of the plant coverage extended about 8 feet in front of the sign. Making it impossible to view without manually displacing the grasses.

Photo 4: This is what the same sign looked like after I pushed aside the grass.

Photo 5: Directly behind the high pressure oil pipeline sign with the Phragmites, off Governor's Road, you can see the farmer is growing corn over top the pipeline. In most of my observations of pipes crossing farm fields, farmers were actively growing corn, soy and hay in this area.

Photo 6: I drove north to Concession No.2 West, near a sign marked 1423 and observed a man made pond placed in close proximity to a high pressure oil pipeline.

Photo 7: 1454 Concession No.2 West has a very large tree in close proximity to a high pressure oil pipeline.

Photo 8: I saw this box on the ground marked Corrosion Services and it appears there is some sort of testing taking place in proximity to the big tree shown in Photo 7.

Photo 9 shows the relation of this device to the tree.

Photo 10 On August 5th, 2016 I was looking at the details of Photo 8 at home in Waterloo to take a closer look on the writing on this black box and that is when I noticed the connectors were not actually plugged in right. I zoomed up Photo 8 to see this detail. You can see the connector going into the red port is not properly fitted and you can see wires exposed on the plug going to the black port. The plug in the red port has a light metallic screws and the other plug appears to have a black screw. It might be due to lighting or someone may have altered the wires of this device. It doesn't look in good shape. If I plugged in my speakers like this it wouldn't work. What is the point of leaving the box here if there is no actual monitoring happening here?

Photo 11: This is the detailed shot of Photo 8 looking at the words on the testing device featured in Photo 8.

Photo 10: By marker 1432 on Hwy 5 I observed soy crops over pipes and here you can see Enbridge's name on the sign. The corrosion as seen in the metal features above ground makes me wonder what the situation is like under ground.

Photo 11: Missing Signs were observed along the route between Copetown to Westover.

Photo 12. Which came first the pipeline or the fencepost? I saw this on Concession 5 near lot 1490. The entire length of fence appears to have been built on top or very near that gas line.

Photo 11: Off Hwy 5 near marker 1442 I observed a farmer cutting hay over the pipeline using a tractor. The dust generated by the process is clearly moving sediment. Rain, dry spells and wind can lead to erosion and thinning of the sediments over the pipes. Driving heavy equipment can compact the dirt.

Questions I have from this:
When farmers till the soil how close do they get to the line?
Is there a weight limit for vehicles traveling above pipelines?
Are there vibrations created by Highway traffic and tractors over these pipelines?
Are there salt mitigation strategies being used to protect the pipes from road salt?

The Pumping Station

Photo 12: I observed a pumping station off HWY 8 and took photographs through the chain link fence with my cell phone to illustrate the fact these pipelines are still using manual valves.

There is a chain holding the wheel. Anyone with the skill sets to steal a bike could figure out how to breech both the fence and the chain using a simple device that can be purchased for about $30 at any hardware store.

I did not see any generators or electrical plugs in this area nor did I see any lights, water or security systems such as electronic surveillance or video cameras. I did not see any first aid kits or fire extinguishers or fire hydrants in the area. I did not see any sort of communications system set up. The system as it appeared to me is, strictly for the purpose of providing a manual valve to close the pipeline without regard for worker safety or outside communications. There is no recording device to monitor any activity that takes place at this site.

In my view this device should be inside a building with proper electronic security mechanisms in place including communications systems, automated valves and working emergency generators.