

© Copyright 2025 RBN Energy

# Can't Hold Back – More Permian Barrels Headed to Corpus Christi, Nederland

*Pipelines Feeding Corpus Christi Have Been Operating Above 90% Utilization Since 2022*



**Gray Oak expansion helping to ease Permian Basin pipeline congestion**

**Plains expands regional connectivity with acquisition of EPIC Crude**

**Cactus I, II are key to Corpus Christi's continued role as crude export hub**

**West Texas Gulf remains integral to Energy Transfer's midstream operations**

**Built piece by piece, Permian Express has evolved into a midstream standout**

## 1. Introduction

Houston and Corpus Christi have been locked in a battle for the top spot as the primary outlet for Permian crude. Lately, the pendulum has been swinging toward Corpus — and not by accident — as nearly every major new or expanded Permian pipeline in recent years has pointed straight there.

There's been fierce competition between Houston and Corpus Christi for Permian barrels for some time; Corpus took a tiny lead earlier this year and the two destinations — export-driven hubs that together handle about 75% of Permian output — are in a dead heat. Through June, roughly 2.45 MMb/d of Permian crude had flowed to Corpus in 2025, just ahead of the 2.44 MMb/d headed to Houston, according to RBN's Crude Oil Permian report, with about 860 Mb/d destined for Nederland. And the pipelines feeding Corpus — Cactus I, Cactus II, Gray Oak and EPIC Crude in total have been cranking above 90% utilization almost every month since late 2022.

All of this is helping to lock in Corpus Christi as one of the Gulf Coast's leading export hubs. It supports 857 Mb/d of refining capacity — Valero (370 Mb/d), Flint Hills (320 Mb/d) and CITGO

(167 Mb/d) — but Corpus's key strength is its export capabilities. According to our Crude Voyager report, 2.25 MMB/d has been exported from Corpus Christi so far this year, with the majority of that coming from the Permian Basin. Enbridge Ingleside Energy Center (EIEC) and South Texas Gateway (STG) are the region's top two crude export terminals by volume, and each can partially load Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs). EIEC has exported 1.1 MMB/d as of the end of November and STG has exported about 652 Mb/d in the same time period.

Four pipelines constructed over the last 10 years have been a major catalyst for getting rising Permian oil to Corpus Christi. **Cactus I** (light-green line in Figure 1 below) was an early mover. The original Cactus Pipeline, a 310-mile, 20-inch-diameter line from McCamey to Gardendale, began operations in 2015 to move Permian and Eagle Ford crude. Capacity grew from 250 Mb/d in 2015 to 390 Mb/d today via additional pumps and other upgrades.

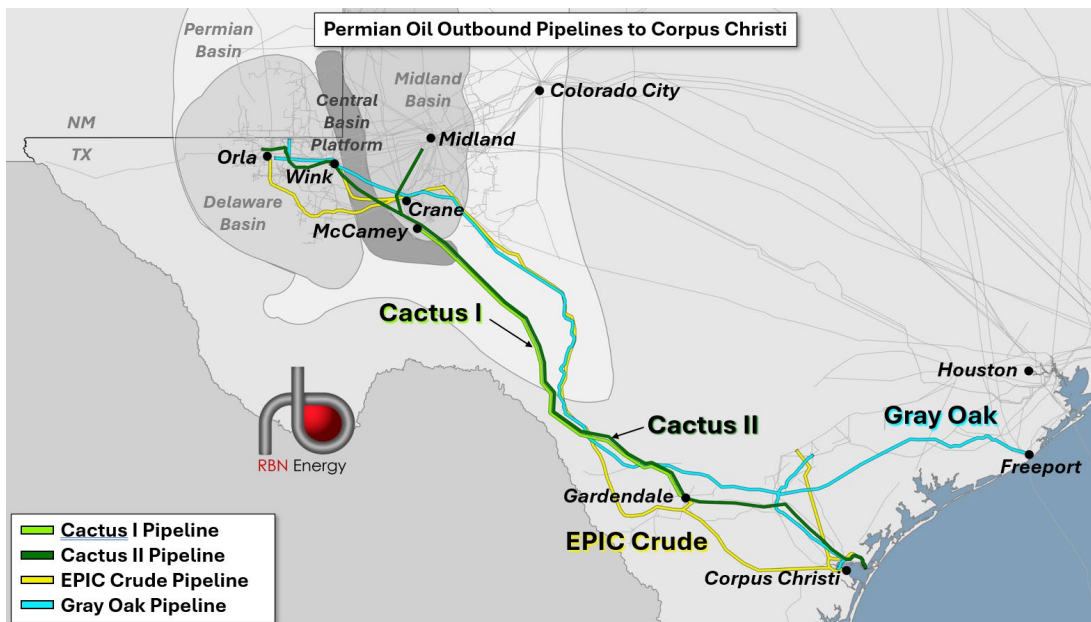


Figure 1. Permian Oil Outbound Pipeline to South Texas. Source: RBN

**Cactus II** (dark-green line) was built in 2019 as a 585-Mb/d, 26-inch, 575-mile pipe from Orla to Corpus Christi and later expanded to 670 Mb/d. The two pipelines account for about one-third of total Permian-to-Corpus activity in operation today. For the first six months of 2025, the pair of pipes were at 95% utilization, bringing them very close to the system's total capacity.

**Gray Oak** (teal line) is an 850-mile, 30-inch pipeline operated by Enbridge that runs from West Texas toward Corpus Christi and Ingleside. It came online in 2019, and its capacity was expanded from 900 Mb/d to 980 Mb/d in April, with a Phase 2 expansion expected to add another 40 Mb/d in 2026.

**EPIC Crude** (yellow line), a 600-Mb/d, 30-inch pipeline, began full service in 2020 and also facilitates the transportation of crude oil from the Permian to Corpus Christi, serving the Delaware, Midland and Eagle Ford basins along the way. It has operated above its nameplate capacity for more than a year.

Corpus Christi has evolved into a solid, viable destination for Permian crude. It has edged just ahead of Houston on the strength of its pipeline connections, robust export capacity (particularly at EIEC and STG) and its refining capacity in the area. We'll dive more into this in our new Drill Down Report, which also includes a detailed overview of the West Texas Gulf and Permian Express pipelines, which deliver Permian crude to Nederland.

**This RBN Energy Drill-Down Report is available for individual purchase or as part of RBN's Backstage Pass premium content service at [rbnenergy.com](http://rbnenergy.com).**

**For more information on group subscriptions, send an email to [info@rbnenergy.com](mailto:info@rbnenergy.com) or call 888-613-8874.**

**The Table of Contents for "Can't Hold Back: More Permian Barrels Headed to Corpus Christi, Nederland" is included on the following page.**

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>- 1 -</b>
<b>2. Gray Oak .....</b>	<b>- 5 -</b>
2.1 Ownership .....	- 5 -
2.2 Connectivity.....	- 6 -
2.3 Corpus Christi and Ingleside .....	- 7 -
2.4 Expansion Plans.....	- 9 -
<b>3. EPIC Crude.....</b>	<b>- 10 -</b>
3.1 Plains All American .....	- 10 -
3.2 EPIC History.....	- 11 -
3.3 Strategic Fit .....	- 13 -
<b>4. Cactus I and II .....</b>	<b>- 14 -</b>
4.1 Origin Story .....	- 14 -
4.2 Connectivity.....	- 15 -
4.3 Rate Changes .....	- 16 -
<b>5. West Texas Gulf.....</b>	<b>- 17 -</b>
5.1 Pipeline Flows .....	- 17 -
5.2 System Upgrades.....	- 18 -
5.3 Longview's Importance.....	- 19 -
<b>6. Permian Express .....</b>	<b>- 20 -</b>
6.1 Ownership and History .....	- 20 -
6.2 Outflows and Connectivity .....	- 21 -