

Keystone XL Pipeline ‘All Risk, No Reward’ State Dept. Told

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GRAND ISLAND, Nebraska, April 18, 2013 (ENS) – Opponents of TransCanada’s Keystone XL tar sands pipeline packed a State Department public hearing on its latest environmental analysis of the pipeline to warn that it is all risk for the United States, with no reward.

More than 1,000 pipeline opponents – far outnumbering supporters – packed a hearing room in Grand Island Wednesday to deliver that message to the State Department officials.

Chair of the new anti-pipeline group “All Risk, No Reward” Coalition, Nebraska landowner Randy Thompson, spoke against allowing a foreign company to transfer Canadian tar sands oil through this country so it can be shipped overseas.

“Families from Nebraska, Arkansas, and Michigan have joined with pipeline, water, and land experts to speak in unison – Keystone XL is all risk and no reward,” said Thompson. “We were loud and clear today to tell President Obama and Secretary Kerry that the tar sands pipeline is not in our national interest.”

“We will be the ones left fixing the fences while Big Oil and the Canadian government reap the rewards,” said Nebraska landowner and “All Risk, No Reward” Coalition Chair Randy Thompson. “We are now entering the final rounds of this bout, and soon President Obama will have to declare a victor. The question is: will he raise the heavy hand of Big Oil, or will he raise the hand and the spirits of the American people?”

Alberta-based TransCanada Keystone Pipeline, LP has applied for a Presidential Permit authorizing the Keystone XL pipeline to cross the U.S.-Canada border carrying 830,000 barrels of diluted bitumen per day from the tar sands of northern Alberta to an existing pipeline in Steele City, Nebraska.

The proposed pipeline would run 1,204 miles of 36-inch-diameter pipe, with 329 miles in Canada and 875 miles in the United States. It would cross the international border between Saskatchewan and Montana.

Because it would cross the Canada-U.S. border, it is the State Department’s responsibility to determine if granting a permit is in the national interest. President Barack Obama will make the final decision.

Pipeline opponents are flooding the TV and radio airwaves with their message while State Department officials are in Nebraska for the hearing.



Nebraska landowner Randy Thompson with Jane Kleebsch at the State Department Hearing in Grand Island, Nebraska. (Photo by Mary Anne Andrei / Bold Nebraska)

The All Risk, No Reward Coalition saturated the Lincoln market and cable news with a TV spot, while the Nebraska Sierra Club has three radio ads on five stations covering almost the entire state and a TV spot running on the 10pm news. The nonprofit BOLD Nebraska has a TV ad on three cable providers covering the Omaha, Lincoln, and central Nebraska communities.

Activists in buses and vans came from Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois and Colorado to Nebraska to express concerns about the effects of extracting, transporting and burning tar sands oil on water, land, and climate.

Residents of Michigan and Arkansas, who have experienced tar sands oil spills firsthand, joined Nebraska landowners and water and pipeline experts at the hearing.

They traveled to Nebraska to remind the State Department of these spills and to send the message that American families should not be subjected to the risks of another tar sands oil spill.



Tar sands oil spilled in Mayflower, Arkansas from a ruptured ExxonMobil pipeline (Photo by U.S. EPA)

April Lane and Glen Hooks from Arkansas told of the local devastation caused by the March 29 tar sands oil spill in Mayflower, Arkansas when ExxonMobil's Pegasus pipeline ruptured.

The spill flooded a Mayflower residential neighborhood with black, sticky diluted bitumen extracted from the tar sands of northern Alberta. Twenty-two families were forced to evacuate and the difficult cleanup is still underway.

Lane a fifth generation Arkansan and community health advocate from Greenbrier, said, "This is about children, elderly, pregnant women, and any woman who will some day be pregnant. It's about protecting the most vulnerable people and in Mayflower," she said. "People don't understand that when you come in contact with tar

sands it can do damage that doesn't show up for weeks, months, years. It's a toxic time bomb."

Hooks grew up visiting his grandparents Bill and Rita Hooks in Mayflower. He now lives in Little Rock, Arkansas and works as senior campaigner with the Sierra Club. "What I saw in Mayflower it should never happen in Arkansas," he said.

"Rivers of tar sands oil pouring down the street where children were playing minutes before. Hazmat suited workers ankle deep in toxic goo. My boyhood fishing hole filled with tar sands," he said. "It's heartbreaking to see oil soaked birds in Mayflower. This should never happen in America."

"Once the tar sands is on the ground, in the water, and in the air, it's too late," said Hooks. "Tar sands is more toxic, more corrosive, and proven nearly impossible to clean up. Americans pay for Canadian tar sands with our children's health, with the safety of our waterways, and with the security of our homes. It's much too high a price to pay."

"The health implications of exposure to tar sand crude are greatly undocumented," said Susan Connolly, an impacted resident of Marshall, Michigan, where a pipeline operated by the Canadian company Enbridge spilled what the U.S. EPA estimates was more than one million gallons of tar sands crude in July 2010.

The heavy, stick black stuff contaminated Talmadge Creek in Calhoun County, Michigan, which flows into the Kalamazoo River. Earlier this month, the EPA ordered Enbridge to do more cleanup.

“Those impacted by tar sand spills and communities in proposed pipelines are left with uncertainty and legitimate concerns,” said Connolly. “The refusal of state and federal agencies to study long-term exposure to tar sand crude such as the spill in Marshall, Michigan and the current spill in Mayflower, Arkansas validates why long term studies must be mandated.”

Pipeline opponents held a press conference before the hearing to express their concerns directly to the public.



Jane Kleeb, director of Bold Nebraska, at a pre-hearing press conference, shows how the altered route approved by Nebraska for the KXL pipeline still crosses the Sandhills and the Ogallala Aquifer, April 17, 2013. (Photo by Mary Anne Andrei / Bold Nebraska)

“The risky route still cross the Sandhills and our main sources of water including the Ogallala Aquifer,” said Jane Kleeb, executive director of BOLD Nebraska. “The Department of Environmental Quality can shrink the Sandhills to give TransCanada political cover but they can’t shrink the risk to our homes and livelihoods.”

“The Keystone XL pipeline is a pipeline through the United States not to the United States. It will put our land, water and climate at risk for the sake of Big Oil’s profits,” said Lorne Stockman, research director at Oil Change International. “It is not in America’s interest to let that happen.”

“The most disturbing failure of the impact statement is that it goes not analyze oil spill planning for Keystone XL specifically,” said Paul Blackburn, an attorney who authored a 64-page report showing a severe lack of oil spill response equipment in Nebraska.

“We’ve been given only very generic information prepared by TransCanada’s consultant in Texas – the same group that planned the spill response for BP. A student writing a class report on how to respond to an oil spill might find it useful,” said Blackburn, “but Nebraskans have no assurance that TransCanada is actually prepared for a spill.”

“TransCanada has a long history of rhetoric for theoretical quality of pipelines, as opposed to what they have built in the United States,” said Evan Vokes, a metallurgic engineer and TransCanada whistleblower.

“TransCanada has not been honest about its construction quality problems that were and are relevant to this hearing.”

“TransCanada wants exclusive right across Nebraskans’ land forever,” said Brian Jorde, legal representative for Nebraska Easement Action Team. “Since forever is a fairly long time, we must fight for as many protections as possible – the abilities of farms and ranches to survive another generation depends on it!”

“We at Ihanktonwan affirm our recent 2013 Protect the Sacred Treaty that our laws affirm our solemn duty and responsibility to our ancestors, to ourselves, and to future generations to protect the land and waters of our homelands from tar sands intrusion which ultimately affects our climate negatively,” said Faith Spotted Eagle, Counselor and Founding Grandmother of the Brave Heart Society.

“It is unacceptable to create jobs that will harm the unborn,” the elder said. “We will not relent in our time to stand firm to oppose Keystone XL.”

“The Sandhills overlay the Ogallala Aquifer, the largest groundwater regional aquifer of its kind in the nation,” said John Hansen, president of the Nebraska Farmers Union. “It is not only the source for the majority of our state’s drinking water, it also supplies water for livestock. Running a potentially contaminating tar sands pipeline through our water supply is not only unnecessary, it is downright foolish.”

“Arkansas residents trusted Exxon when it said its tar sands pipeline was safe – instead, we got homes evacuated, wildlife killed, and months of cleanup ahead,” said David Carruth, Central Vice Chair of the National Wildlife Federation Board of Directors.

“Here in Nebraska, Grand Isle is one of the most important places in the world for Sandhill cranes, but Keystone XL would put those magnificent birds at risk for another disastrous spill,” said Hansen. “Nebraska can’t afford to make the same mistake.”

In 2010, TransCanada built a different pipeline called Keystone. In its first year, that pipeline had 12 separate spills in the United States, including one that released 21,000 gallons of oil.

The original Keystone pipeline between the U.S. and Canada had “over 30 spills” in its first year, according to a report by Cornell University’s Global Labor Institute. These spills came after TransCanada’s CEO pledged the pipeline would “meet or exceed world-class safety and environmental standards.



Faith Spotted Eagle, Brave Heart Society, offers up a prayer for the pipeline fighters on the eve of the Grand Island State Dept. hearing. (Photo by Mary Anne Andrei / [Bold Nebraska](#))