

NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

Keystone XL Tar Sands Pipeline: We Can Do Better for Our Future, Jobs, and Security

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<http://www.nrdc.org/energy/keystone-pipeline/>

The Keystone XL tar sands pipeline would carry the dirtiest oil on the planet strip-mined and drilled from under the forests of Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. The Obama administration has said it will take another year to conduct a thorough review of the economic, national security and environmental facets of this project. This is especially true since the path for a critical part of the pipeline through Nebraska is not even determined yet. However, Congress passed a bill requiring the Administration to make a decision on the pipeline by February 21, 2012. The only decision that can be made in this timeframe is to reject the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline. And that is the right decision for America. Keystone XL is not in the national interest.

The Keystone XL tar sands pipeline puts U.S. homes and farms at risk from oil spills and worsening climate change while undermining clean energy jobs. And the main purpose of the pipeline is for the major oil companies to bring tar sands to overseas markets while Americans bear all the risk. Clean energy and fuel efficiency is the path forward for economic and energy security in America – not another tar sands pipeline.

The dirtiest oil on the planet

It takes two tons of tar sands – strip-mined or drilled from the forest floor - to produce a single barrel of bitumen; a low-grade, high-sulfur crude oil that must be extensively refined to be turned into fuel. Producing bitumen generates three times the carbon pollution of producing conventional North American crude oil.¹ And the additional refining required to turn tar sands into fuel only makes matters worse.

Killing more jobs than it creates

Tar sands oil interests claim the pipeline will create tens of thousands of jobs.² It won't. The pipeline would create, at most, 6,000 temporary construction jobs, very few of which would be local hires, according to the U.S. State Department.³ After that, it would leave only "hundreds" of permanent jobs, according to TransCanada, the Canadian company that wants to build the pipeline.⁴ A Cornell University study concludes the pipeline would actually kill more jobs than it would create, by reducing investment in the clean energy economy that already employs 2.7 million Americans.⁵

¹ NRDC, Setting the Record Straight: Lifecycle Emissions of Tar Sands, November 2010. http://docs.nrdc.org/energy/files/ene_10110501a.pdf.

² The GOP website <http://www.gop.gov/indepth/jobs> says "Keystone is a project that would create over 100,000 jobs..." (last accessed December 14, 2011).

³ Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), Socioeconomics, Section 3.10. August 26, 2011. http://www.keystonepipeline-xl.state.gov/clientsite/keystonexl.nsf/16_KXL_FEIS_Sec_3.10_Socioeconomics.pdf?OpenFileResource. See p. 3.10-57 for the 5,000-6,000 jobs number, and p. 3.10-80 for the 20 jobs number.

⁴ TransCanada Vice President Robert Jones in a CNN interview on the number of permanent jobs: "... you are probably looking in the field from Montana to Houston in the hundreds, certainly not in the thousands because those are construction jobs." November 11, 2011. CNN, <http://mediamatters.org/mmtv/201111110019>.

⁵ Cornell University Global Labor Institute. *Pipe Dreams: Jobs Gained, Jobs Lost by the Construction of Keystone XL*, September 2011, p. 27. http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/globalaborinstitute/research/upload/GLI_KeystoneXL_Reportpdf.pdf. The Cornell University study looks at the potential loss of

Making us more oil-dependent; not more secure

The pipeline would terminate at Texas refineries and ports along the Gulf of Mexico. From there tar sands crude could be exported anywhere in the world.⁶ Indeed, that's part of the business plan for some of the companies that have promised to buy the oil. Military experts advise that the Keystone XL pipeline would perpetuate our deadly oil dependence and will not make us more secure.

"This pipeline would move dirty oil from Canada to refineries in Texas and would set back our renewable energy efforts for at least two decades, much to our enemies' delight." Steven M. Anderson, retired Army brigadier general⁷

Taking on a risk to benefit oil companies that Canadians themselves are not willing to take

Even Canada has put the brakes on their new proposed tar sands pipelines (the Northern Gateway⁸ tar sands pipeline to the west coast and the Trailbreaker⁹ tar sands pipeline to the east) due to the need to take more time to listen to public concerns about water and safety. Why should Americans carry a risk that Canadians themselves are not willing to take?

Threatening America's breadbasket and U.S. waterways

The pipeline would cut through the heart of the Great Plains, land of more than 250,000 ranches and farms, putting our croplands and food producers at risk of oil spills across the American heartland.¹⁰ Tar sands oil interests want approval of the pipeline despite the fact that Nebraska has not even settled on a route to avoid the precious Ogallala Aquifer, where millions of Americans get their drinking water. Keystone XL would cross more than 1,500 waterways, from the Yellowstone River in Montana to Pine Island Bayou in Texas, threatening them with the kind of accident that dumped 42,000 gallons of oil into the Yellowstone River last summer and put 20 times that much tar sands oil in Michigan's Kalamazoo River in 2010, in a spill that as of a year and a half later still hasn't been cleaned up.¹¹

Laying waste to Canada's boreal forest, home of our backyard birds

Tar sands producers have already destroyed an area the size of Chicago creating an industrial wasteland¹² of toxic sludge dams in the heart of Canada's Boreal forest, one of the last truly wild places on Earth and a critical nesting region for America's backyard birds.¹³ If it continues, the total sacrifice area will be as large as the State of Florida.

jobs through rising oil prices in the Midwest due to the Keystone XL pipeline which is something that the pipeline proponent TransCanada has said would be one impact. Agricultural and other jobs could also be lost in the case of oil spills from the pipeline as it crosses America.

⁶ NRDC and Oil Change International, Keystone XL Pipeline: Undermining U.S. Energy Security and Sending Tar Sands Overseas, January 2012.

⁷ Steven Anderson, "Tar Sands pipeline will comfort our enemies," The Hill's Congress Blog, October 25, 2011. <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/energy-a-environment/189595-tar-sands-pipelines-will-comfort-our-enemies>.

⁸ Vancouver Sun, December 7, 2011, "Northern Gateway pipeline decision will be delayed until late 2013: panel."

<http://www.vancouversun.com/business/Northern+Gateway+pipeline+decision+will+delayed+until+late+2013+panel/5820686/story.html>

⁹ Canadian Press, December 6, 2011, "NEB to hold hearings into Enbridge Line 9 pipeline reversal in Ontario." <http://ca.finance.yahoo.com/news/NEB-hold-hearings-Enbridge-capress-1286023375.html>

¹⁰ NRDC et al, Tar Sands Pipelines Safety Risks, February 2011. <http://www.nrdc.org/energy/tarsandssafetyrisks.asp>

¹¹ Fritz Klug, "Cleanup of Kalamazoo River oil spill to cost 20% more, or \$700 million, Enbridge says," The Kalamazoo Gazette, September 26, 2011.

http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2011/09/enbridge_estimates_kalamazoo_r.html.

¹² NRDC et al, Tar Sands Invasion: How Dirty and Expensive Oil from Canada Threatens America's New Energy Economy, May 2010.

<http://www.nrdc.org/energy/files/TarSandsInvasion-full.pdf>

¹³ NRDC et al, Danger in the Nursery: Impact on birds of tar sands oil development in Canada's Boreal forest, December 2008.

<http://www.nrdc.org/wildlife/borealbirds.asp>

Clean energy solutions: reducing oil dependence and creating jobs

The Keystone XL tar sands pipeline is a conduit to the past. Rather than deepening our addiction to fossil fuels, it's time we did what presidents reaching back to Richard Nixon have called on us to do and reduce our dangerous dependence on oil. Adopting a series of oil savings policies would reduce U.S. oil consumption and imports by 5.7 million bpd in twenty years. These measures include fuel efficiency, smart growth, and other measures to reduce our dependence on oil to increase security and make us less tied to shifts in world oil prices.

And clean energy is also the better path forward for jobs and economic security. Clean car manufacturers have created more than 151,000 quality long term jobs in the United States while saving consumers billions of dollars at the pump.¹⁴ Moreover, a recent study found the United States can gain as many as 1.9 million more jobs with a comprehensive energy policy.¹⁵ These clean energy jobs are real, long-term, and number in the millions.

Keystone XL Tar Sands Pipeline Basics

In September 2008, the Canadian pipeline company TransCanada formally proposed the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline that could bring as much as 900,000 barrels per day (bpd) of diluted bitumen that is mined and drilled from under Alberta's Boreal forests to the U.S. Gulf Coast running nearly 2000 miles to Houston and Port Arthur, Texas – traversing six U.S. states and including critical rivers, streams and farmland. Because the pipeline crosses an international border, the U.S. Department of State must decide that the pipeline is in the national interest and grant a presidential permit, in addition to the other required federal, state, and local permits.



¹⁴ United Autoworkers et. al., Supplying Ingenuity: U.S. Suppliers of Clean Fuel Efficient Vehicle Technologies, August 2011 (<http://www.nrdc.org/transportation/autosuppliers/>).

¹⁵ David Roland-Hoult, Fredrich Kahrl, Clean Energy and Climate Policy for U.S. Growth and Job Creation, October 16, 2009, (<http://calclimate.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/host-Clean%20Energy%20and%20Climate.pdf>).