

Center for Rural Affairs applauds Denial of Pipeline Construction

Written by Elisha Smith

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Controversial Keystone XL Pipeline route rejected

Lyons, NE - Americans concerned about the proposed route of the Keystone XL Pipeline received welcome news Wednesday when the Obama administration announced the rejection of a special U.S. State Department permit for the Keystone XL pipeline.

"We applaud President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton for making a common sense decision that protects both Nebraska and the entire nation," said Johnathon Hladik, Energy Policy Advocate at the Center for Rural Affairs.

Approving the Keystone XL pipeline without an established route through Nebraska would amount to a failure on the part of our federal government to consider the best interests of the American people," Hladik concluded.

According to a U.S. State Department news release, the Department has been conducting a transparent, thorough, and rigorous review of TransCanada's permit application for the proposed Keystone XL Pipeline project since 2008. As a result of this process, particularly given the concentration of concerns regarding the proposed route through the Sand Hills area of Nebraska, on November 10, 2011, the Department announced that it could not make a national interest determination regarding the permit application without additional information.

Specifically, the Department called for an assessment of alternative pipeline routes that avoided the uniquely sensitive terrain of the Sand Hills in Nebraska. The Department estimated, in consultation with the State of Nebraska and TransCanada and based on prior projects of similar length and scope, that it could complete the necessary review to make a decision by the first quarter of 2013.

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Congress passed the Temporary Payroll Tax Cut Continuation Act of 2011 on December 23, 2011. The Act provides 60 days for the President to determine whether the Keystone XL pipeline is in the national interest – which, according to the State Department release, the Administration considers insufficient for such a determination. The denial of the permit does not, however, preclude any subsequent permit application or applications for similar projects.

The Center for Rural Affairs rallied along with thousands of other Nebraskans during the past year building opposition to the proposed line, attending hearings across the state and expressing concern about the proposed route of the pipeline. Many Center supporters and staff members testified in opposition to the pipeline's projected route, which would travel through 300 miles of Nebraska, including 92 miles across the Sandhills, bringing oil from tar sands in northern Canada to refineries in the southern United States. A determined set of individuals and organizations representing varied interests and communities throughout Nebraska played a pivotal role in the final decision.

“This decision is a win for the innumerable citizens, activists and advocates who made their voice heard,” said Hladik. “While there is still work to be done, we can now be proud that we did our part to protect our air, land and water for this generation and the next.”