

Keystone XL: Pipeline for dirty tar sands oil

The Keystone XL pipeline, proposed by TransCanada, would carry 900,000 barrels of tar sands oil daily from Alberta, Canada to the Gulf Coast.¹ Tar sands have a terrible environmental record as one of the dirtiest oil sources on Earth. The pipeline will endanger nearby people and the climate.

Tar sands is dirty oil:

- Tar sands oil emits three times more greenhouse gases during production than conventional gasoline.²
- About three barrels of water are polluted and dumped in toxic pools (called tailing ponds) for every barrel of oil produced.³
- Tar sands extraction requires strip mining huge tracts of pristine forest. An area the size of Florida is slated for extraction.
- The project harms the lives and health of indigenous people living downstream from the tar sands operations and has been connected to high rates of rare cancers, renal failure, lupus, and hyperthyroidism in the area.⁴



The Keystone XL pipeline:

- Replacing the crude oil currently being used by refineries with tar sands oil will increase our greenhouse gas emissions by 38 million tons of carbon dioxide per year. This equals the annual emissions of 6 million cars.⁵
- The pipeline will travel more than 1,700 miles through farmland and fragile ecosystems, such as the Missouri River. Pipeline breaks are not uncommon. In the last decade, there have been over 2,500 pipeline disasters, leading to 161 deaths.⁶
- Refining tar sands oil emits high levels of mercury and other disease causing air pollutants than conventional oil. In Texas, the communities around these refineries already have unacceptable air quality, according to EPA, and cannot afford more pollution.
- By connecting tar sands oil to the Gulf Coast, the Keystone XL will make our nation's fuels dirtier and undermine the clean energy solutions we need to avert catastrophic climate change.

The presidential permit: An opportunity for action

- A Johnson-era executive order requires that the Department of State evaluate all pipeline proposals that cross U.S. borders.
- Under the executive order, only pipelines that are determined to be in the national interest should be granted a Presidential Permit to cross the border.⁷
- The Obama administration has an opportunity to avert this dangerous mistake in U.S. energy policy. It is in our national interest to create a clean energy economy, not increase our reliance on dirty tar sands oil.

¹ State Department website: <http://www.keystonepipeline-xl.state.gov/clientsite/keystonexl.nsf?Open>

² Charpentier, Alex D., et al. "Understanding the Canadian oil sands industry's greenhouse gas emissions (2009)."

³ Levi, Michael A. "The Canadian Oil Sands: Energy Security vs. Climate Change (2009)." p 11.

⁴ Nikiforuk, Andrew. *Tar Sands* (2008). Greystone Books. p 89

⁵ Based on 0.117 tons more CO₂ per barrel of tar sands oil (Source: GREET).

⁶ Assault on America: A Decade of Petroleum Company Disaster, Pollution, and Profit." National Wildlife Federation. July 2010.

