



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on February 3, 2014

Latest Keystone Pipeline Study Greeted with Cheers, Protests

In the release on Friday of the [fifth environmental impact study](#) of the Keystone XL pipeline, partisans on both sides of the issue were quick to point to the key paragraph in that study:



Approval or denial of any one crude oil transport project, including [the Keystone XL pipeline project], is unlikely to significantly impact the rate of extraction in the oil sands [in Alberta, Canada] or the continued demand for heavy crude oil at refineries in the United States.

Those favoring the pipeline saw this as supporting the country's economy and lessening its dependence upon foreign, less friendly, sources of oil. Senate Minority Leader Mitch Mitchell (R-Ky.) declared:

The Keystone XL Pipeline is the single largest shovel-ready project in America, ready to go, but for years President Obama and his hard-left allies have stalled these jobs in a maze of red tape.

If the president meant what he said this week about a "year of action," he'll act now on this important project that won't cost taxpayers a dime to build but will bring thousands of private-sector jobs to Americans who need them.

Mitchell's comments were echoed by Senator Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.):

I have been incredibly frustrated for more than five years by the repeated and unnecessary delays in moving forward with the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline. I am pleased the State Department has confirmed there is no evidence of any negative environmental impact from building this pipeline.

The Keystone pipeline project was initiated by TransCanada in 2008, but was delayed with repeated requests for more analysis. Russ Girling, the president of TransCanada, expressed relief that his company's project is supported by the facts:

The case for Keystone XL, in our view, pre- and post this report, [is] as strong as ever. No matter how much noise [environmentalists] make or how much misinformation they spread, the facts do support this project....

It will have minimal impact on the environment.

Those opposed saw little in the report to cheer about, believing it was confirmation that the continued extraction of the heavy oil from the Athabasca Oil Sands will threaten the environment. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-Ca.) thought the study inaccurate:

I will not be satisfied with any analysis that does not accurately document what is really happening in the ground when it comes to the extraction, transport, refining and waste disposal of dirty, filthy



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tar sands oil.

My biggest concerns continue to be the serious health impact on communities and the dangerous carbon pollution that comes from tar sands oil.

Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.) wrote off the report's conclusion as well:

The State Department is asking us to believe this pipeline is in the national interest. How can a pipeline that ships Canadian tar sands to the Gulf of Mexico for export, that does nothing to increase our energy independence, and that will deal irreparable damage both to our landscapes and our air quality possibly meet that definition?

Environmentalists such as Susan Casey-Lefkowitz of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) even saw something in the report that wasn't there:

Even though the State Department continues to downplay clear evidence that the Keystone XL pipeline would lead to tar sands expansion and significantly worsen carbon pollution, it has, for the first time, acknowledged that the proposed project could accelerate climate change.

President Obama now has all the information he needs to reject the pipeline.

What really puts the president on the hot seat, however, is the support for the pipeline from one of his staunchest allies: Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO, who stated, "We think that anything that's going to create jobs, help the country and do it in an environmentally sound way ought to be done."

This pits Obama supporters against each other while putting pressure on Democrats supporting the project if the president rejects it. Both Senators Mary Landrieu (D-La.) and Mark Begich (D-Alaska) are vulnerable in November and could suffer in their reelection campaigns if the president axes the project.

There will be no meeting in the middle on the issue, according to Professor Bernard Weinstein of the MacGuire Energy Institute. In speaking with *The New American*, Weinstein said he was hopeful that the horrific derailment of 76 tank cars carrying Bakken oil in the town of Lac-Mégantic in Quebec last July, which killed nearly 50 people and almost destroyed the town, would persuade environmentalists that the Keystone pipeline would make more sense in that it is a much safer way to transport crude oil. Instead, he said, "The accident just proved to them that any transport of oil is dangerous and oil extraction of any kind should be ended altogether."

Now that the report has been published, there is a 60-day period for public comment and input before any decision is made. Some environmentalist groups, including 350.org, have threatened to engage in non-violent protests at the White House similar to those that got 1,200 arrested in the summer of 2011.

The State Department report, however, isn't likely to speed up the decision-making process. President Obama has stalled before, putting off any final decision until after the 2012 election, and he could well do so again. He probably will let the problem descend onto the desk of Secretary of State John Kerry who, while believing in the theory of climate change in spite of evidence to the contrary, has been invisible on Keystone. The report is an amazing seven volumes long, which someone on his staff is going to have to read. And then, before deciding what to recommend to the president, Kerry is likely to seek counsel from at least eight other government agencies: the Departments of Defense, Justice, Interior, Commerce, Transportation, Energy, Homeland Security, and the EPA. As Kerry's assistant, Kerri-Ann Jones, noted, this report "is not a decision document ... [it] is only one factor that will be coming into the review process for this permit."



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Instead of expecting a decision at the end of 90 days, some say it could take as long as a year — well past the November elections — neatly solving the president's political problems.

In the meantime, tar sands oil will continue to be harvested and shipped by rail if not by pipeline to meet worldwide demand.

A graduate of Cornell University and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics.

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