



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on January 23, 2014

EPA Worked With Enviro Groups to Kill Keystone XL Pipeline

[E-mails](#) obtained under a Freedom of Information Act request reveal that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been plotting with environmental groups to kill the Keystone XL pipeline, which would run from Canada to Texas. The request was filed by the Energy and Environmental Legal Institute. Lawmakers indicate that the e-mails are “damning.”



Advocates of the Keystone XL Pipeline claimed that the project would create tens of thousands of jobs in the oil industry, and that the construction alone would have created 20,000 jobs. The plan was rejected by President Obama, and e-mails show that the EPA had been colluding with environmental groups to ensure that the Keystone XL Pipeline project would not come to fruition.

Under its former name, the American Tradition Institute, the Energy and Environmental Legal Institute (EELI) filed two specific 2012 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. For months, the EPA refused to process the requests, and an EPA FOIA specialist admitted that she and her colleague were instructed not to work on the requests.

Much of the e-mails that were exposed as a result of the requests are between the EPA and the Sierra Club.

One communication revealed Lena Moffit of the Sierra Club writing to three senior policy staffers at the EPA, including Michael Goo, then the associate administrator for policy, on the subject of the Keystone XL pipeline.

An e-mail from Moffit to Alex Barron, EPA senior advisor in the Office of Policy, acknowledges a strategy session that took place the day before with the agency officials: “Thanks so much for taking the time to meet with us on Keystone XL yesterday.... I know this is a tough issue but please do let me know if I can be helpful in any way — particularly in further identifying those opportunities for EPA to engage that don’t involve ‘throwing your body across the tracks,’ as Michael put it.”

Chris Horner of the Energy and Environment Legal Institute asserts that as a government agency, the EPA cannot overtly attempt to kill the pipeline, and therefore must reach out to environmental groups for ideas on how to do it.

“On its face,” Horner told Fox News, “it smacks of classic secret dealing and an uncomfortably close working relationship and one that is known to these parties, but quite plainly not advertised to the



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public.”

Lawmakers have seized upon the e-mails as evidence of assertions they have been making all along. Senator John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) told [Fox News](#), “Despite the fact that Keystone XL has bipartisan support in Congress and from governors, environmental extremists inside and out of the administration are working behind closed doors to kill it.... These damning emails make it clear that the Obama administration has been actively trying to stop this important project for years.”

According to Horner, many EPA staffers share a policy agenda with environmental groups, a fact that is emphasized by the e-mails the EELI obtained.

“This series of correspondence plainly indicates that you’ve got an agency that’s made up its mind — working with allies with whom it is ideologically and substantively aligned on this — trying to find ways to advance their argument without being too obvious about it,” Horner told Fox News.

Previous e-mails obtained by the EELI show that the Keystone XL pipeline is not the first item over which the EPA and environmental groups have colluded. Dozens of e-mail exchanges regarding coal and the regulations related to coal-fired power plants reveal this.

In one e-mail, John Coequyt, head of the Sierra Club’s “beyond coal” campaign, wrote to Goo and another EPA staffer to pressure the EPA into adopting regulations so strict that coal plants that had already received construction permits could not be built.

“Attached is a list of plants that the companies shelved because of uncertainty around GHG regulations. If a standard is set that these plants could meet, there is a not small chance that they [sic] company could decide to revive the proposal,” Coequyt wrote.

More damning is an e-mail from Coequyt to Goo and Alex Barron, wherein Coequyt responded jokingly to an August 2012 article that quoted now-EPA administrator Gina McCarthy as saying the new regulations would not kill coal.

“Pants on fire,” wrote Coequyt.

According to an EELI [press release](#), the environmental groups involved sought the aid of others in their opposition:

Other emails reveal that another left wing pressure group, for which Sierra served as liaison to EPA, sought to hire The Brattle Group to assist their campaign, providing a more authoritative voice for their economic claims. Jurgen Weiss, a principal with the consulting firm, raised his concerns about the viability of their approach. Responding to an inquiry from Ryan Salmon, Climate and Energy Policy Coordinator for the National Wildlife Fund (NWF), Weiss said that, although there were obvious political points the green groups might try and score this way, it was not likely a proposal he would fight for internally given, “As you can tell, I am currently not convinced that the argument you are trying to make is really strong based on economics.”

Further e-mails show Goo and Coequyt arranging a meeting at a nearby Starbucks to discuss agendas. Horner contends that the two had purposely chosen an external meeting place to discuss issues without having to sign into the EPA building.

Fox News writes, “There is also evidence, said Horner, that EPA officials sought to keep their deliberations with environmental groups out of the public record by using private email accounts and back-channel communications.”



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For example, James Martin, the EPA's former Region 8 administrator, exchanged e-mails with the Sierra Club's chief legal counsel Vickie Patton on a ".me" account instead of the official EPA server. Martin resigned in February of 2013 after a controversy involving the use of his personal e-mail to conduct official communications.

Fox News reports that many of the e-mails provided have been redacted, but with the proposed regulations on coal being published, Horner and the EELI plan to go to court to obtain the original versions.

But Horner asserts that what has already been seen is quite revealing.

Horner notes, "I thank Sierra Club for inadvertently assisting our effort to hold the Obama administration to its promise of transparency. By, according to Ms. Moffitt, repeating in writing what EPA official and former green-group activist Goo only spoke, the public now knows EPA's involvement, what the Agency told allies it could realistically do to help block Keystone, and that it had opened the floor for suggestions."



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