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Thursday, 27 February 2014 06:36

First Canadian Tar Sands Oil Flows Through Southern Keystone XL Pipeline as Senators Warn of Cancer Risks

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MARK KARLIN, EDITOR OF BUZZFLASH AT TRUTHOUT

Two US senators joined a Canadian physician to call for a study to determine the health impact of the proposed Keystone XL Pipeline (northern leg), including the likelihood of increased cancer.

According to a Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) [February 26 article](#),



[Tar Sands Blockade](#)

Senator Barbara Boxer, a Democrat representing California, and Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, a Democrat from Rhode Island, held a news conference in Washington along with Dr. John O'Connor, an Alberta physician.

O'Connor told the news conference that carcinogens get into the food chain, water and air in communities downstream from the oilsands and that those toxins are linked to cancers occurring in those areas. He said he has "no political agenda" and that he is only advocating for his patients.

O'Connor shared his concerns about higher than average cancer rates, and rare cancers, in Fort Chipewyan, and he told CBC News he is trying to shine a spotlight on the "callous indifference" to the health of those who live downstream from the oilsands....

"Health miseries follow the tarsands from extraction to transport to refining to waste disposal," [Senator Boxer] said.

Just recently, the US State Department greenlighted the northern Keystone XL Pipeline for the second time, although the two analyses it issued have been mired in controversy.

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As Cong. Raul M. Grijalva (D-AZ) [wrote in an opinion piece](#) in the New York Times (NYT) on Wednesday:

As the news media has [reported widely](#), the contractor chosen by the State Department to assess the pipeline's environmental impacts violated federal conflict-of-interest rules to get the job, and nothing has been done about it. That company, Environmental Resources Management, did work for TransCanada, Keystone's parent company, in the recent past and told the State Department the exact opposite on disclosure forms that anyone in the world can now read for herself....

If E.R.M.'s decision that Keystone does not pose any environmental risks is allowed to stand, it will not just move Keystone closer to an unjustified approval; it will re-establish the Bush-era habit of tipping the scales in favor of corporations that want special treatment.

Furthermore, the State Department reports focused on the issue of possible environmental damage of the northern segment (which it dramatically underassessed considering the ongoing pipeline spills that occur in the US); it did not highlight the potential health damage. It also did not prominently address the key environmental question to the future of the planet: how increased production of Alberta tar sands oil will release a deluge of carbon into the atmosphere at the point of production. In short, more tar sands oil flowing through the US means exponentially increased carbon damage to the planet's protective layers due to the pipeline enabling more production in Canada.

As BuzzFlash pointed out several times last year, however, even with the temporary delay placed on the new northern portion of the Keystone XL Pipeline by a federal judge, tar sands oil is already flowing into the US -- and causing environmental damage (with the most undercovered catastrophe occurring in Kalamazoo, Michigan, from the Enbridge pipeline there). On its own website, Enbridge [describes the Flanagan Pipeline](#) it is building to Cushing, Oklahoma, (from central Illinois) to expand the capacity to transport tar sands and other crude oil. Cushing is the hub that links to the southern leg of the Keystone XL Pipeline.

It is important to emphasize that this is all happening without the northern portion of Keystone XL being constructed at this point.

In fact, a petroleum industry content website, FuelFix, [announced yesterday](#):

The Keystone XL southern leg has delivered its first barrels of Canadian oil to the Texas coast, even though the project still lacks its planned northern leg into Canada, TransCanada CEO Russell Girling said in an interview Wednesday.

The crude moved through TransCanada's existing pipelines, including the original Keystone pipeline that began operation in 2010.

The oil then made its way from Cushing, Okla., to Nederland, Texas, on the recently completed \$2.3 billion southern portion of Keystone XL, also called the Gulf Coast Project, he said. It arrived at the end of the line last week. TransCanada began moving [US domestic crude] oil into the pipeline on Jan. 2 and [made its first deliveries \[of US domestic crude oil\] to refiners on Jan. 22.](#)

The movement of Canadian crude [just a few days ago] illustrates the capabilities of TransCanada's Keystone pipeline system, even without the controversial northern leg that would extend from Hardisty, Alberta, and traverse the Bakken Shale region of North Dakota and Montana before connecting with other lines, Girling said.

FuelFix claims that "Up to 700,000 barrels a day will be able to move through the Keystone XL southern leg."

"We just moved the first batch of Canadian oil right through the whole system from Canada right through the Gulf Coast," [TransCanada told FuelFix on February 26]. "So (refiners) know they can do that. And they know they can do that on an ongoing basis and a reliable basis, so their buying patterns will switch to being more reliant on North American supply." Prior to this week -- as noted earlier -- the first oil moving through the southern leg was domestic.

Meanwhile, the approval of the northern leg of Keystone (which would increase flow and profit for the tar sands petroleum industry) is on hold (due to the appeal process for the federal court ruling halting eminent domain seizure of land by TransCanada), but the atmosphere-busting, environmentally damaging and cancer-threatening oil is already reaching Texas refineries (with some of the Canadian oil being shipped to the current US pipeline by rail).

While the battle over a new northern Keystone XL Pipeline rages on, the CEO of TransCanada, Russ Girling, has turned on the tap that means tar sands oil are now officially flowing from north to south in the US.

As a result, the Earth is on notice of increased turbulence and destruction.

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