



Clockwork Contamination

Nonstop Failures Plague Tar Sands Pipelines

As Secretary of State Hillary Clinton prepares to decide whether to allow construction of TransCanada's Keystone XL tar sands pipeline across 2,000 miles of U.S. heartland, a review of recent tar sands pipeline recent problems and accidents underscores that more spills and contamination are not a matter of if but WHEN.

Tar sands oil and the Keystone XL pipeline: A ticking time bomb for the Ogallala Aquifer

The massive Ogallala Aquifer, which stretches across eight states from South Dakota to New Mexico, provides drinking water for millions of Americans and 30 percent of the groundwater used to irrigate U.S. crops. In Nebraska, Keystone XL would pass within 1 mile of 64 percent of the state's groundwater wells.

Scientists at the University of Nebraska recently warned that the Great Plains states are risking an unknown level of environmental and economic damage if Keystone XL goes in above the Ogallala Aquifer without further study.

<http://bit.ly/tarsandswater>

Just Like Clockwork – 12 Leaks in 12 Months

- On June 23, 2010, barely a month into operation, TransCanada's Keystone tar sands pipeline sprung its second leak, spraying 20 gallons of crude oil in three seconds in South Dakota.
- The worst spill occurred less than a year later. In May, Keystone's 11th leak gushed 21,000 gallons of oil in North Dakota.
- Spill No. 12 happened on May 29, 2011 in Kansas, which prompted the U.S. Department of Transportation to order a shutdown of the pipeline since continued operation "would be hazardous to life, property and the environment."
- Pipelines that are determined an immediate threat to public safety are usually around 45 years old. Keystone is one year old.
- The Keystone pipeline's horrific performance record during its first year in operation shows the corrosive and abrasive nature of thick raw bitumen and volatile natural gas that constitutes tar sands.





Company Promises Don't Prevent Problems

TransCanada tries to dispel safety concerns surrounding its tar sands pipelines, but the company's rhetoric hasn't fit reality.

RHETORIC: In its 2006 pipeline risk assessment for the U.S. State Department permit application, TransCanada predicted that Keystone would see one spill in 7 years.

REALITY: There have been 12 spills in 1 year.

RHETORIC: In 2008, TransCanada claimed that Keystone would be built with "state-of-the-art design features."

REALITY: Last year, the company was ordered to dig up about a dozen sections of Keystone pipeline after government-ordered tests indicated that defective steel may have been used.

RHETORIC: After the 11th Keystone spill, TransCanada claimed that Keystone was shut down nine minutes after it was detected. TransCanada spokesperson Terry Cunha said: "We are demonstrating that the pipeline system is safe by showing that our leak-detection system is working as it is outlined to."

REALITY: A North Dakota state investigation later found that the time lag was in fact 45 minutes. A local landowner reported seeing crude oil shooting from the pipeline above trees while Keystone operators were still analyzing leak-detection data.

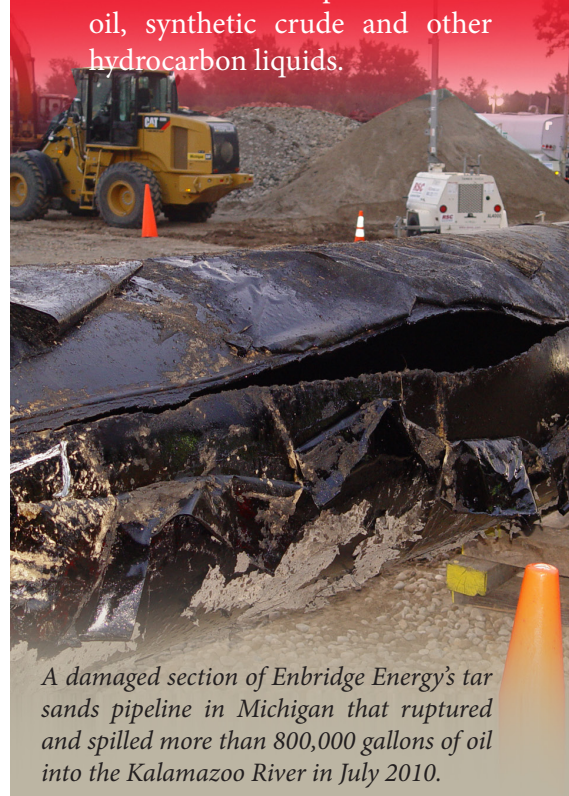
RHETORIC: A TransCanada spokesman has claimed that "the pipeline is operating safely... what we've had are incidents at our pump stations."

REALITY: Tar sands crude spills occur in all parts of a pipeline. In July 2010 an underground pipeline operated by Canadian firm Enbridge spilled nearly 1 million gallons of tar sands oil into a 30-mile stretch of Michigan's Kalamazoo River, killing plants and wildlife, and sickening over 500 residents who suffered from headaches, respiratory problems, and nausea due to exposure.

Endemic Tar Sands Spills in Canada Should Further Caution U.S.

Likely due to the corrosive nature of tar sands crude, pipelines in Canada have spilled much more frequently than oil pipelines in the U.S. even though Canada's system is newer, which raises red flags for Keystone XL's potential failures in America.

- In April 2011, more than a million gallons of crude spilled from a ruptured pipeline operated by Plains Midstream Canada in the Canadian boreal forest. It was Alberta's worst spill in 35 years, killing wildlife and affecting the health of residents in a nearby town.
- From 1990 to 2005, there were more than 4,700 spills of crude oil, synthetic crude and other hydrocarbon liquids.



A damaged section of Enbridge Energy's tar sands pipeline in Michigan that ruptured and spilled more than 800,000 gallons of oil into the Kalamazoo River in July 2010.