



Keystone Pipeline: Housecats Have More Emissions Impact

By Steve Goreham

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On Friday, the Department of State released a 2,000-page draft [review](#) of the proposed Keystone XL pipeline project. If approved, the pipeline will carry up to 830,000 barrels of oil per day from oil sands in Canada and the Bakken oil fields in North Dakota and Montana to Gulf Coast refineries. The review did not recommend approval of the pipeline, but raised no major objections, concluding that the project was “unlikely to have a substantial impact” on the climate or oil sands production. Nevertheless, the same-day outrage from liberal politicians and environmental groups was caustic.

The report found that the \$3.3 billion Keystone XL project would create 42,100 US jobs during the two-year construction period. In addition to construction of the pipeline, new electrical transmission and power substations would be required. The project would generate an estimated \$65 million in use and sales taxes for traversed states.

If approved, Gulf Coast facilities would refine more oil from Canada and the northern US and less from the Middle East. Keystone could potentially replace 45 percent of the oil [imported](#) from the Persian Gulf. At \$90 per barrel, this would supplant \$27 billion in annual payments to Saudi Arabia and Gulf Coast nations with payments to Canada and US citizens.

Van Jones, *CNN* contributor, raised fears of an oil leak, [calling](#) Keystone the “Obama pipeline” and saying that a leak “could be the worst oil disaster in American farmland history.” Proper environmental care must be taken, but Americans know how to build pipelines. The proposed 875-mile pipeline would add to the 55,000 miles of U.S. crude oil [pipelines](#) that have been operating for decades. The lower Great Plains region over the Ogallala aquifer is already [crisscrossed](#) by tens of thousands of miles of pipelines.

The report concluded that potential oil leaks were unlikely to affect groundwater quality in four major aquifers.

However, oil leaks are a red herring issue. The keystone pipeline battle has always been about the ideology of Climatism, the belief that man-made greenhouse gases are destroying Earth's climate. Proponents of the theory of man-made warming warn that mankind's tiny contribution to a trace gas in our atmosphere, carbon dioxide, causes extreme hurricanes, droughts, floods, snowstorms, rising seas, polar bear extinction, and other projected calamities. Canadian oil sands have become a lightning rod for climate activism.

Congressional representative Henry Waxman issued a press release, [stating](#) "The draft impact statement appears to be seriously flawed. We don't need this dirty oil. To stop climate change and the destructive storms, droughts, floods, and wildfires that we are already experiencing, we should be investing in clean energy, not building a pipeline that will speed the exploitation of Canada's highly polluting tar sands."

Greenpeace Executive Director Phil Radford [said](#) "...it's just untrue that piping oil from the Tar Sands will not have a devastating impact on our climate. To fulfill his promise to the American people to address global warming, the President must say no to the Keystone Pipeline." But the State Department draft review points out that Canadian oil sands will be mined, regardless of whether the pipeline is built or not.

The review estimates that if Keystone is not built, oil sands production will be only 0.4 to 0.6 percent less than if the pipeline is built, or less than 0.83 million metric tons of CO₂-equivalent emissions annually. This difference equates to less than two hours of [U.S. emissions](#), a negligible amount. Seventy-four million US [housecats](#) annually [cause](#) an estimated 196 times this emissions volume. Why isn't Greenpeace urging President Obama to ban cats?

If not through Keystone, mined oil will be transported by rail, truck, or planned pipelines in Canada. Last month, the China Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) [completed](#) the purchase of Nexen, a major producer of oil from Canadian sands, for \$15 billion. CNOOC would not have purchased Nexen without assurance by the Canadian government that the oil can be harvested.

Mr. President, it's your decision. On one side is the common-sense choice of more jobs, economic growth, reduced dependence on Mideast oil, and a negligible increase in greenhouse gas emissions. On the other side is Climatist ideology. Which will you choose?

Steve [Goreham](#) is Executive Director of the [Climate Science Coalition of America](#) and author of the new [book](#) *The Mad, Mad, Mad World of Climatism: Mankind and Climate Change Mania*.