

A Sustainable Environment: Our Obligation to Protect God's Gift

by
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We Must Continue Our Fight Against Tar Sands Oil

Three months ago, I wrote an article titled “We’re Heading in the Wrong Direction with Oil Sands” in which I stated that the crude from Canada should not be shipped through the U.S. for processing. My concern is that this oil will emit twice as much carbon dioxide than all of the oil used previously. I was hoping that the U.S. administration would not allow the construction of the pipeline. But the energy lobby in the U.S. is too strong.

As expected, the House of Representatives recently voted 241-175 to approve the building of the Keystone XL Pipeline between the Canadian border and Steele City, Nebraska. This usurped authority over the project from the executive branch which is still weighing the issue. Now it has to go to the Senate, but I expect that it will also pass that branch. Another interesting vote by the House was their refusal to prohibit the export of the Canadian tar sands crude shipped into the U.S. via the Keystone XL Pipeline by TransCanada.

The action by U.S. House of Representatives along with the expected support from the Senate will allow the construction of the pipeline to bring the tar sands crude from Canada to the U.S. gulf for processing and eventual export to Asia. The U.S. consumer will not receive any benefit by increasing the supply of gasoline in the U.S., and thus a lower price, but the large oil companies will certainly benefit with increased production and increased sales.

While all eyes are on TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline, another Canadian company is quietly building a 5,000-mile network of new and expanded pipelines that would achieve the same goal as the Keystone. In fact, the project by Enbridge, Inc., Canada's largest transporter of crude oil, would bring even more Canadian oil into the U.S. than the much-debated Keystone project. This dirty crude oil from Canada will not only emit larger quantities of carbon dioxide, but it will also cost more to process. So even if this oil were for the U.S. market, it would drive up the price of gasoline – a double whammy, more carbon and higher prices.

Every year there are more and more indicators that climate change is a global problem, and it is becoming more serious every year. The concentration of carbon dioxide, which is directly related to the warming of the planet, has exceeded 400 parts per million for the first time in over two million years. At the rate of increase of the carbon dioxide concentration, the planet will be warming at an unprecedented and dangerous rate. We could exceed an increase of 8-10 ° F. by the end of the century. To put this in perspective, the current global temperature is only 10 °F. above that during the last ice age.

The U.S. has always been a world leader when it comes to policy, technology, peace and social concerns. So the rest of world is always looking to us for guidance. But when it comes to climate change, the U.S. has really fallen behind. Not only were we the only country not to

ratify the 1997 Kyoto Protocol for the establishment of carbon emission reduction milestones, but we continue to ignore the critical indicators that something must be done. One of the milestones was to reduce emissions globally within 15 years by just 5% below 1990 levels. Not only did we fail, we increased the emissions by 58%. While China is now the largest emitter of carbon dioxide, it has established programs to switch from fossil fuel derived energy to renewable energy as quickly as possible.

Fortunately, there are some initiatives that may help move the U.S. in the right direction. An organization called Bold Nebraska was recently formed to stop the construction of the Keystone pipeline. They have started a fundraising campaign to build wind and solar energy projects along the pipeline's Nebraska route. If the Keystone pipeline is approved, Bold Nebraska states that Keystone will have to tear down the clean and locally produced energy sources to make way for dirty and foreign tar sands. So you can see that there are some serious initiatives to stop the transporting of dirty crude oil through the U.S. However, the big question is whether these initiatives will overrule the energy lobby that is controlling the fossil fuel initiatives at the expense of climate change.