



TransCanada: Keystone XL's greenhouse gas impacts would be minimal

By: Nick Snow – July 18, 2013

Greenhouse gas emissions from the proposed Keystone XL crude oil pipeline would be minimal, TransCanada Corp., the project's sponsor, reiterated in a letter to the US Department of State. The 3-7 million tonnes of additional emissions represents 0.06-0.1% of the 2011 national GHG inventory and would have an unmeasurable climate impact, it said.

The July 17 letter was a clear response to US President Barack Obama's statement, in his June 25 climate policy address, that "the net effects of the pipeline's impact on our climate will be absolutely critical in determining whether this project is allowed to go forward (OGJ Online, June 26, 2013)."

It also cited written testimony by Paul C. Knappenberger, assistant director of the Cato Institute's Center for the Study of Science, to a joint hearing of two US House Science, Space, and Technology Committee subcommittees that an additional 18.7 million tonnes/year of carbon dioxide emissions would raise the global average temperature by 0.00001° C. Referring to Obama's Keystone XL remarks in his climate policy address, Heather Zichal, his deputy assistant for energy and climate change, emphasized on July 18 that the matter is still under DOS review.

"The president certainly did raise the bar and made it clear that climate impacts should be part of that analysis," she continued during a POLITICO Pro Future of Energy breakfast briefing. "Beyond that, I would direct you to [DOS]."

In a letter to Genevieve Walker, DOS's National Environmental Policy Act coordinator, Kristine Delkus, TransCanada's senior vice-president for pipeline law and regulatory affairs, wrote that the diluted bitumen Keystone XL would transport has comparable lifecycle GHG intensities to other heavy crudes, that the decision on a single pipeline's cross-border permit application will not affect development of Alberta's oil sands, and that governments and oil sands producers are working to mitigate GHG emissions further as production grows.