

Army Corps of Engineers rules against planned Dakota Access pipeline route

By Associated Press 12.06.16

CANNON BALL, N.D. — In a victory for the Standing Rock Sioux tribe and its supporters, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said Sunday that it will not grant an easement, or a right to use someone else's land, for the Dakota Access oil pipeline in southern North Dakota.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is a branch of the Army. It helps build and plan things like dams, which are used to create more drinking water and prevent flooding.

Pipeline Would Have Passed Through Tribal Land

The pipeline would be a series of tubes underneath the ground. The tubes would make it easy to transport oil, which is used for energy. However, members of the Native American tribe and others argued the project would threaten the tribe's water source and cultural sites.

North Dakota's leaders criticized the decision to not grant the easement. Gov. Jack Dalrymple called it a mistake that "prolongs the dangerous situation" of having several hundred protesters camping on federal land in the cold winter. Kevin Cramer, a lawmaker in the U.S. House of Representatives, said it's a "very chilling signal" for the future of infrastructure in the United States. Infrastructure includes roads, buildings and other construction needed by society.

The pipeline project is largely complete except for the now-blocked section underneath Lake Oahe, a Missouri River reservoir. It has been built in four states at a cost of \$3.8 billion.

U.S. Government Wants To Look At Other Routes

Jo-Ellen Darcy is Assistant Secretary for Civil Works for the U.S Army Corps of Engineers. She said in a news release that there is a need to "explore alternate routes" for the pipeline. Her decision doesn't rule out that it could cross under the reservoir or north of Bismarck.

"Although we have had continuing discussion and exchanges of new information with the Standing Rock Sioux and Dakota Access, it's clear that there's more work to do," Darcy said. The best way to complete that work responsibly is to look at other routes, she said.

The company building the pipeline, Energy Transfer Partners, released a statement Sunday night slamming the decision as a political one. The statement also claimed that President Barack Obama's administration wanted to delay the matter until he leaves office. The company said that Obama's leadership has abandoned the rule of law to gain favor with an extreme political group.

Pipeline Protesters Say They Are Not Leaving

The decision came a day before the government's deadline for the several hundred people at the Oceti Sakowin, or Seven Council Fires, camp to leave the federal land. But protesters say they're prepared to stay. Officials say they won't forcibly remove them.

As the news spread Sunday, cheers and chants of "mni wichoni" — "water is life" in Lakota Sioux — broke out among the protesters. Some in the crowd banged drums. Miles Allard, a member of the

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Standing Rock Sioux, said he was pleased but remained cautious, saying, "We don't know what Trump is going to do." "The whole world is watching," Allard added. "I'm telling all our people to stand up and not to leave until this is over."

U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch said Sunday that the Department of Justice will "continue to monitor the situation." The department stands ready to support those who can help to ease tensions, she said. The safety of everyone in the area continues to be their main concern, Lynch added.

Carla Youngbear of the Meskwaki Potawatomi tribe made her third trip from Kansas to be at the protest site. "I have grandchildren, and I'm going to have great grandchildren," she said. "They need water. Water is why I'm here."

Military Veterans Support Protesters

Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier, whose department has done much of the policing for the protests, said that "local law enforcement does not have an opinion" on the easement. He said that his department will continue to "enforce the law."

U.S. Secretary for the Interior Sally Jewell said in a statement that the Corps' "thoughtful approach ... ensures that there will be an in-depth evaluation of alternative routes for the pipeline and a closer look" at possible effects.

Military veterans are among those supporting the tribe. An organizer with Veterans Stand for Standing Rock said tribal elders had asked the veterans not to confront law enforcement officials. About 250 veterans gathered about a mile from the main camp for a meeting with organizer Wes Clark Jr.

"We have been asked by the elders not to do direct action," Clark said. He added that the National Guard and law enforcement are armed, warning, "If we come forward, they will attack us." Instead, he told the veterans, "If you see someone who needs help, help them out."

Law Enforcement Wants Protesters To Obey The Law

Authorities moved a blockade from the north end of the Backwater Bridge with the conditions that protesters stay south of it and come there only if there is a planned meeting. Authorities also asked protesters not to remove barriers on the bridge. They have said the bridge was damaged in the late October conflict that led to several people being hurt, including a serious arm injury.

"That heavy presence is gone now," Cass County Sheriff Paul Laney said in a statement, adding that he hopes leaders in the camps will respond by preventing violence. He repeated that any violation will "will result in their arrest."

Steven Perry, a 66-year-old Vietnam veteran who's a member of the Little Traverse Bay band of Odawa Indians in Michigan, spoke of one of the protesters' main concerns: that the pipeline could harm drinking water. "This is not just a native issue," he said. "This is an issue for everyone."

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Events that have ALREADY HAPPENED	What the government plans / hopes to do to resolve the problem

Other facts or notes:

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