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Pipeline Company Kinder Morgan Abandons Utica Marcellus Texas Pipeline Project

Hazardous Liquids Conversion Project Dropped Over Opposition in Kentucky

RICHMOND, KY – Pipeline company Kinder Morgan has officially dropped its plans to convert a more than 70 year-old, 2-foot diameter pipeline from natural gas service to transport of hazardous natural gas liquids (NGLs). Natural gas liquids are hydrocarbon byproducts coproduced in fracking operations in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, and pose significantly greater safety and environmental risks than natural gas.

The Utica Marcellus Texas Pipeline (UMTP) project would have reversed flow direction and converted service on the Tennessee Gas Pipeline (TGP), which crosses six states and 18 Kentucky counties. The project drew sharp criticism and vocal opposition from a wide range of Kentucky counties and institutions, including the cities of Danville and Richmond where the existing pipeline passes through dense neighborhoods and over Herrington Lake. Nearly 1,000 comments opposing the project were submitted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

The pipeline conversion project raised significant concerns over gaps in federal and state regulatory authorities, disclosure of risks to the public and local governments, and the rights of communities to determine whether or not hazardous liquids pipelines are compatible with high density residential areas and drinking water resources.

Kentucky citizens, county governments, and environmental groups worked together for more than three and half years to stop the project. A federal lawsuit by organizations Kentucky Heartwood, Kentucky Resources Council, and the Allegheny Defense Project, challenging the September, 2017 approval of the project by FERC, is pending in the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals. Other organizations involved in effort to block the pipeline conversion project include the Kentucky Environmental Foundation, Danville's Citizens Opposed to the Pipeline Conversion, and the Kentucky Student Environmental Coalition.

Following FERCs approval of the project, Kinder Morgan repeatedly filed quarterly extensions for its required Implementation Plan, citing market uncertainty and their need to “confirm the degree of market interest in the project.” The company has said that will maintain the line in natural gas service, and seek to reverse flow of this material to move natural gas from Appalachia to the Gulf of Mexico.

Also on record opposing the project are Boyle, Madison, Clark, Garrard, Marion, and Rowan Counties, the cities of Danville, Richmond, and Junction City, and Lexington/Fayette County Government. Institutions and economic organizations opposing the project include Eastern Kentucky University, Madison County Schools, Berea College, Blue Grass Area Development District, Danville/Boyle County Economic Development Partnership, and the Richmond Chamber of Commerce.

Kentucky Environmental Foundation Project Director, Craig Williams said, “As more and more local governments and other institutions publically opposed this dangerous plan it seems the momentum shifted from the profit driven corporation(s) to those trying to protect their communities. This is a great accomplishment for the people of Kentucky.”

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