

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 8, 2015

**From: Center for Biological Diversity, National Wildlife Federation, MN350, Sierra Club, National Resource Defense Council, Indigenous Environmental Network, Bold Nebraska**

### **Illegal Alberta Clipper Expansion Scheme**

This week, oral arguments will be heard in federal court in Minneapolis over the illegal backroom deal conducted between the U.S. State Department and Canadian tar sands company Enbridge to nearly double the amount of oil flowing on its Alberta Clipper tar sands pipeline.

Because the Alberta Clipper crosses the U.S./Canada border, this expansion in volume is subject to the same federal review process as the controversial Keystone XL tar sands pipeline. But by connecting the Alberta Clipper to a [newly installed pipe segment](#) built in the right-of-way of an older, nearby pipeline at points just above and below the border, Enbridge has moved forward with the expansion and bypassed the legally required federal review of the project's environmental and social impacts. It's certainly not surprising that an oil company would try to skirt the process that has held up the Keystone XL for six years, but what is shocking is that the State Department has allowed it to do so.

Last year, conservation and tribal groups [filed a lawsuit](#) against the State Department, arguing that allowing this scheme to move forward is a clear violation of the laws designed to protect our environment. After this week's hearing, it could be weeks or months before the court issues a decision on the legality of the State Department's actions. But it's clear that the Obama Administration already has all the information it needs to stop this dangerous project in its tracks.

- **The Alberta Clipper expansion represents a serious threat to land, water, and communities in the Midwest.** Though it would not bring any meaningful benefit to the region, Alberta Clipper brings substantial risk to the residents and ecologically and culturally significant places along its route, which include three Native American reservations, as well as the Northern Divide, the Mississippi river, the Chippewa National Forest, and Leech Lake. Increasing the capacity of the pipeline would raise its pressure, causing more destruction in the case of a spill. As history has proven, when it comes to tar sands pipeline spills, it is not a question of 'if', but 'when'.

Enbridge has a particularly egregious track record of pipeline spills. From 1999 to 2010, Enbridge was responsible for more than 800 spills that released 6.8 million gallons of hydrocarbons into the environment. Enbridge is responsible for three of the fifteen largest onshore oil spills in U.S. history, including the 2010 Kalamazoo River disaster, the most expensive onshore tar sands oil spill in U.S. history. In July 2010, Enbridge's Line 6B burst and spilled more than 800,000 gallons of tar sands oil into the Kalamazoo River. The spill contaminated at least 35 miles of the river and demonstrated that tar sands spills pose unique risks to water resources. Five years and a billion dollars later, the area is still recovering from this disastrous spill.

- **Allowing this expansion to continue is a step in the wrong direction for the Obama Administration on climate.** [Studies have shown](#) that tar sands crude is significantly more climate-polluting than conventional crude, and the tar sands industry is currently at a point where it [requires substantial investment and additional pipelines](#) in order to expand development. Allowing projects like the proposed Keystone XL and the Alberta Clipper expansion would effectively throw a lifeline to this toxic industry at a time when we should be focused on keeping dirty fossil fuels in the ground.
- **Unsurprisingly, there has been widespread opposition to this project in the Midwest.** Even before this issue was on the national radar, advocates in Minnesota were fighting against the project tooth and nail at Minnesota Public Utilities Commission hearings across the state. Now that the decision has reached the State Department, people from across the Midwest have been making their voices heard in opposition to the Alberta Clipper expansion.

They have collected petitions, visited their senators' offices, and made thousands of calls into the White House. In June, [over 5,000 people joined the Tar Sands Resistance March](#) to protest the illegal expansion of Alberta Clipper and the growing network of pipelines flooding the Midwest in toxic tar sands. Then, just last month, over 100 young people from the Midwest traveled to Washington, DC, [with more than 20 getting arrested at Secretary of State John Kerry's front doorstep](#), to call on him to preserve his legacy as a climate champion by walking back Enbridge's scheme.

- **Beyond the substantive issues with the Alberta Clipper expansion, this scandal reveals a startling lack of consistency within the Obama Administration.** Both President Obama and Secretary Kerry have emphasized the importance of the federal review process with regard to the controversial proposed Keystone XL. "The process needs to be honored, not circumvented, and that means that there has to be the thorough sort of process of determination," [Secretary Kerry said of Keystone XL](#) in January. "So we're continuing to conduct the rigorous, and, I might add, transparent objective review." But the Administration has completely ignored this process for Alberta Clipper.

Put simply, the scheme to illegally expand the Alberta Clipper tar sands pipeline is a threat to communities and natural resources in the Midwest and to our climate, and makes a mockery of the laws that are meant to protect our communities and our environment. The Obama Administration should walk back this illegal scheme, and elected leaders at every level of government in the Midwest should be calling on them to do just that.

**For more information, contact:**

Elysa Neumann, [elysa@newpartners.com](mailto:elysa@newpartners.com), [774-275-4836](tel:774-275-4836)

Jonathon Berman, [jonathon.berman@sierraclub.org](mailto:jonathon.berman@sierraclub.org), [202-495-3033](tel:202-495-3033)

Valerie Love, [vlove@biologicaldiversity.org](mailto:vlove@biologicaldiversity.org), [510-274-9713](tel:510-274-9713)

Andy Pearson, [andy@mn350.org](mailto:andy@mn350.org), [612-600-5951](tel:612-600-5951)

Miles Grant, [GrantM@NWF.org](mailto:GrantM@NWF.org), [703-864-9599](tel:703-864-9599)

Jake Thompson, [jthompson@nrdc.org](mailto:jthompson@nrdc.org), [202-289-2387](tel:202-289-2387)

Jane Kleeb, [jane@boldnebraska.org](mailto:jane@boldnebraska.org), [402-705-3622](tel:402-705-3622)