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PRESS RELEASE

**Speakers gather from across West to voice concerns over
KXL threats to water, climate, and land rights**

BILLINGS, Mont. - Speakers from across the western United States gathered in Billings, MT yesterday for a rally demanding protection for water, climate, and land rights against the Keystone XL (KXL) pipeline, a project of Canada's TC Energy Corporation. The rally was organized by the Northern Plains Resource Council and the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) to provide the press and other attendees an opportunity to hear directly from individuals and communities who would be impacted by the controversial pipeline.

The rally took place in frigid temperatures outside a Billings convention center, the site of the nation's only public meeting regarding the U.S. Department of State's recently released [Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement \(SEIS\) for the proposed Keystone XL Pipeline](#). The meeting did not include a public hearing - Individuals seeking to provide comment were directed to computers for submission or private rooms with State Department stenographers.

The rally, filled with attendees carrying "Protect Our Water" and "No KXL" signs in subfreezing temperatures, was the only chance for press to hear directly from the public in an open format. Speakers and rally goers traveled on icy roads from across Montana with others arriving from as far as North Dakota and Nebraska.

The recently released Draft SEIS is crucial to the future of the Keystone XL pipeline, and will be relied upon for future permitting decisions from the Bureau of Land Management and the Army Corps of Engineers. In particular, the "Section 408" Army Corps permit required for the proposed Missouri River crossing of the pipeline would rely on a final version of this SEIS. The proposed site of the pipeline crossing has been scrutinized because it [sits beneath the spillway of the Fort Peck Dam](#), subjecting it to immense volume and velocity of water discharge from the dam.

[The Fort Peck Dam releases water between 14,000 and 65,000 cubic feet per second](#). This risks “scour erosion” of the riverbed which could lead to exposure of a buried pipeline, making it highly susceptible to leaks.

“As Chairman, I can tell you without a doubt that the Keystone XL Pipeline poses a direct threat to our water system,” said Bill Whitehead, Northern Plains member and Chairman of the Assiniboine and Sioux Rural Water Supply System on the Fort Peck Reservation. “The site where the KXL pipeline would cross the Missouri River is directly upstream from the intake for our drinking water. This provides water not only to all of Fort Peck, but also to communities further east of us. As many as 30,000 people could have their drinking water affected by a pipeline spill.”

“We also have water intakes downstream from the proposed pipeline crossing that serve our irrigation system,” continued Whitehead. “This irrigation system is part of a 100 year agreement with the U.S. government. We depend on this water to grow our food and take care of livestock. Our very existence is dependent on this water.”

“We know from history that the question is not if a pipeline spills but when,” said Senator Frank Smith of Poplar, Montana on the Fort Peck Reservation. “This tar sands oil is dangerous stuff that is impossible to clean up when it leaks. Our water system will be destroyed by a KXL spill. We refuse to sacrifice our water for the sake of a Canadian oil company.”

The draft SEIS results from a November 2018 federal ruling that found a [prior EIS was both inadequate and outdated](#). That ruling resulted from a lawsuit filed by Northern Plains and other conservation organizations.

The [comment period](#) for the draft SEIS runs through November 18, 2019.

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Northern Plains Resource Council is a grassroots conservation and family agriculture group that organizes Montanans to protect our water quality, family farms and ranches, and unique quality of life.

The Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) is a network of grassroots organizations that span seven of the Western states with more than 15,000 members. Headquartered in Billings, Montana, WORC also has offices in Colorado and Washington, D.C.