



The Honorable Brian Schweitzer
Office of the Governor
Montana State Capitol Bldg.
P.O. Box 200801
Helena MT 59620-0801
FAX: (406) 444-5529

March 16, 2009

Dear Governor Schweitzer:

On behalf of the Northern Plains Resource Council, I am writing to ask your help in protecting residents of Montana from unfair risks of oil spills that could result should TransCanada receive a special exemption from U.S. safety laws for its proposed Keystone XL pipeline.

TransCanada has applied for a special permit under regulations of the United States Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA). The special permit would allow TransCanada to operate the Keystone XL pipeline at a higher percentage of the pipe's maximum operating pressure than any existing oil pipeline. In effect, the special permit would allow TransCanada to use thinner, cheaper steel.

TransCanada will still use thicker, safer steel in what are known in the PHMSA rules as "High Consequence Areas." High Consequence Areas include railroad crossings, highways, river crossings, and "High Population Areas" – which, of course, do not include the rural areas of Montana through which the Keystone XL pipeline will predominately run. TransCanada may not have yet calculated the total length of pipe that will be built with thinner pipe, but it is fair to say **of the pipeline's 282 mile route through Montana only 4.7 miles will use thicker, safer pipe.**

We are offended that our farms, ranches, and recreation areas are not worthy of the same level of protection as densely populated cities. These "low consequence areas" are extremely important to Montana's future economy and food supply. According to the Montana Department of Agriculture 2008 Agricultural Statistics Report Vol. XLV, "A comparison of selected Montana industries shows agriculture outpaced other industry sectors by \$418 million in 2007." It is unfair that agriculture and ranch businesses should bear extra risk of oil leaks, ruptures, or spills in order to save TransCanada the cost of using the safest materials and methods of construction available. If permitted, the state would be sacrificing an economically strong, historic, sustainable, and productive way of living for a short-term, out of state, non-sustainable industry.

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We respectfully request your help in ensuring that the farmers, ranchers, and rural communities along the proposed route of the Keystone XL pipeline are not treated as second-class citizens when it comes to safety, health, and property. We ask you to be true to your words, that “*As Governor I will continue to highlight our extraordinary natural beauty and I will try to share with the world the undiscovered riches of our friendly and hardworking Montanans,*”

We ask your help in opposing issuance of a special permit for the Keystone XL Pipeline, and ensure that TransCanada uses the safest available materials and practices in constructing, operating, and monitoring the pipeline in rural and populated areas alike.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth Kaeding". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Beth Kaeding, Chair
Northern Plains Resource Council