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Pipeline Operators Hail a Return to Sanity on Pipelines

WASHINGTON, DC – The Association of Oil Pipe Lines (AOPL) hailed government issuance of an easement yesterday for the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), the final step necessary to complete construction of the project.

“Action on DAPL sends a signal to pipeline operators, our customers, and the workers and consumers that benefit from pipelines, that sanity is being restored to the pipeline approval process,” said Andrew Black, AOPL President and CEO.

Last night, after concluding extensive outreach to stakeholders over the last several years, an exhaustive environmental review completed last summer and in response to direction by the White House in January, the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) issued an easement for the Dakota Access Pipeline to cross under Corps lands surrounding Lake Oahe in North Dakota. The pipeline will burrow 100’ beneath the bottom of the lake tunneling deep underground before reaching the lake shoreline and coming back up after the opposite lake shoreline. The pipeline will never come near any water in the lake. The easement was necessary to conduct this work on federal land.

Corps issuance of the easement was based on a formal Finding of No Significant Impact after conducting an environmental review of the Dakota Access Pipeline project. Required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the NEPA review represents the federal government’s official assessment of the environmental and cultural impacts of the project.

The Corps’ environmental review of DAPL and alternative actions totaled over 1,000 pages. Dakota Access’s federal NEPA review found the proposed route for the pipeline is the preferred alternative and would have less of an impact on the environment than all other alternatives, including a different route of the pipeline or no pipeline at all.

A federal district court judge in September found the 250 interactions between the Corps, Dakota Access representatives and consulting tribal, cultural and historic representatives met or exceeded the Corps’ legal obligations.

Delay in the DAPL review and approval process last fall came only after political appointees of the previous administration in Washington, DC halted the work of Corps career staff in the field. Action by the Corps granting the easement showed a return to respecting the legal environmental and consultation approvals Dakota Access had already obtained and justified granting final approval to this project.

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