

Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Chairwoman Janet Alkire

Speaks Out Against Energy Transfer Misinformation

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Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Chairwoman Janet Alkire is speaking out against misinformation published by Energy Transfer, the owner and operator of the Dakota Access Pipeline. “A big part of the problem with the Dakota Access Pipeline is the secrecy and misinformation by Energy Transfer,” Alkire stated. She pointed out the extensive redactions in the DAPL oil spill response plan submitted to the federal government in April 2023.

“All of the important information, such as the worst case discharge calculations, and the clean-up control points for an oil spill are blacked out. Standing Rock’s first responders will need this information to safely supervise any clean up activities on the Standing Rock Reservation,” Alkire stated.

She pointed out that other reports needed to protect the Missouri River in the event of an oil spill have not been released to the Tribes or the public, at all. “Energy Transfer has hidden driller logs that prove that up to 1.4 million gallons of drill mud was lost during construction of the pipeline.” Alkire explained that this is especially concerning because Energy Transfer was convicted in 2022 of 23 criminal violations of Pennsylvania’s Clean Streams Act, for using unapproved chemical additives to drill mud, which polluted the nearby aquifer and waterways

“Was Standing Rock’s groundwater polluted also?” asked Doug Crow Ghost, Director of the Tribe’s Department of Water Resources. “We do not know, because they are keeping the information hidden.”

According to Alkire, Standing Rock is also concerned with what she referred to as “Energy Transfer’s lies.” Its web site states that DAPL “does not encroach or cross any land owned by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.” <https://dakotapipelinefacts.com>. “In fact, DAPL crosses Standing Rock’s unceded Treaty lands from the Heart River to the east bank of the Missouri River, and encroaches on our Tribe’s aboriginal territory for

hundreds of miles, where we have hunting, fishing and gathering rights, and many sacred sites,” she explained.

Crow Ghost described Energy Transfer’s oft-repeated statement that DAPL is “one of the most technologically-advanced” pipelines as misinformation. “Industry experts identify secondary power supplies at emergency flow restriction devices, such as the shut-off valves at the Missouri River, as required technology. DAPL was built without a back-up power supply at the valves. If there is a power outage, and the pipeline needs to be shut down for any reason, their workers will have to go out to the site with a crescent wrench – real high-tech,” Crow Ghost stated.

Alkire explained that the secrecy and lack of transparency prompted the Tribe to file a lawsuit against the Army Corps of Engineers to shut down DAPL. She expressed dismay that Energy Transfer has characterized Standing Rock’s lawsuit as “rehashing old ground.”

“Nothing could be further from the truth,” Alkire stated. “This legal action is based on new information – such as Energy Transfer’s criminal convictions on August 5, 2022, and the drill mud spill, which we learned of a few months ago.” The oil spill response plan, challenged by the Tribe as inadequate, was submitted in April 2023 – years after Standing Rock’s prior legal action had concluded.

Since 2017, when Standing Rock initiated legal action to prevent construction underneath the Missouri River, Energy Transfer and its subsidiaries have been convicted of environmental crimes and have been subject to numerous civil penalties for pipeline safety violations. They caused 66 “significant incidents” as defined by the U.S. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration – almost one per month. According to the Standing Rock’s lawsuit, “From 2017 through 2023, Energy Transfer LP pipelines have spilled 48,005 barrels of oil (2,016,210 gallons) or about 600 barrels (25,200 gallons) per month. These spills caused property damage totaling almost \$57 million, or \$1 million in property damages per month.”

In 2022 and 2023, Energy Transfer had nine spills exceeding 1,000 barrels, making it the most serious violator during this period. The second worst violator had one spill. It is easy to see why Standing Rock Tribal leaders are concerned.

“The secrecy by the Corps of Engineers and the misinformation by the pipeline company put our community at risk,” Alkire stated. “So we are taking action.”

Energy Transfer’s criminal convictions prompted the Inspector General of the Environmental Protection Agency to debar the pipeline operator from federal contracts or other assistance. “There is no easement for DAPL to cross Corps-administered land, and Energy Transfer is debarred from obtaining an easement,” Crow Ghost stated. “The Corps should shut this pipeline down.”

For additional information:

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