

# **“Game Over” for the Planet if XL Oil Pipeline is Built to Tap Alberta Tar Sands**

By [Sherwood Ross](#)

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*One of America’s foremost climate scientists says that if the proposed Keystone XL oil pipeline is built to tap the tar sands of Alberta, Canada, the impact on the Earth’s climate will be devastating.*

“Essentially, it’s game over for the planet,” said James Hansen, the head of NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies. He is quoted by reporter Jane Mayer in the Nov. 28th issue of “The New Yorker” magazine as making the statement to environmental activist Bill McKibben.

Building the pipeline would hasten the extraction of exceptionally dirty crude oil, using huge amounts of water and heat, from the tar sands, which would then be piped across the United States, refined, and burned as fuel, releasing a vast new volume of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere, reporter Mayer writes.

“The tar sands’ oil deposits may be a treasure trove second in value only to Saudi Arabia’s, and the pipeline, as McKibben saw it, (and) posed a powerful test of America’s resolve to develop cleaner sources of energy, as Barack Obama had promised to do in the 2008 campaign,” Mayer said. McKibben is a scholar-in-residence at Middlebury College, Vt.

As the pipeline crosses an international border, the lead role in evaluating the project is being made by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who has indicated she is “inclined” to approve it, Mayer reported. The project is the scheme of Canadian developer TransCanada, the and is being boosted by Laborers’ International Union of North America, hungry for the jobs the pipeline would create.

Paul Elliott, TransCanada’s in-house lobbyist, “The New Yorker” reported, formerly worked on the presidential campaigns of both Bill and Hillary Clinton. What’s more, Gordon Giffin, a prominent contributor to Ms. Clinton’s Senate and presidential campaigns, was on TransCanada’s payroll. (Giffin denied he ever spoke to Ms. Clinton about the pipeline.) Energy insiders, the magazine says, reportedly are near unanimous in their view that the project will be approved.

Opposing the XL pipeline are an array of environmental groups that include the Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, and National Resources Defense Council. Republican Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman and both that state’s senators oppose it, fearing their water supply would be imperiled by XL construction. And opposition is strong: last Nov. 6th, 12,000 protesters encircled the White House to voice their opposition.

President Obama's response, reporter Mayer said, was to issue a statement that the decision on the pipeline permit would be delayed at least until 2013, pending further environmental review.

Meanwhile, environmentalist McKibben is quoted saying anti-pipeline protesters will not engage in any physical protests. "We're going to do the much more dangerous thing of saying we need to hear from the Obama who said those beautiful things in the campaign. (That the U.S. needed to develop cleaner sources of energy.) We expect him to do what he promised."

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