

US to hold Keystone pipeline hearing in Nebraska

March 27 2013



US President Barack Obama speaks at the southern site of the Keystone XL pipeline on March 22, 2012 in Cushing, Oklahoma. The US State Department said Wednesday it will hold a public meeting in Nebraska in April on the controversial \$5.3 billion Canada-to-Texas oil pipeline, just days before a key consultation period ends.

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The April 18 meeting on the Keystone XL Project will take place in the midwestern US state's environmentally-sensitive Sandhills area, which the [pipeline](#) had initially been set to traverse.

President [Barack Obama](#) rejected that initial proposal, and a new route has now been drawn up by operators TransCanada to avoid that area, winning the backing of the Nebraska authorities.

"The purpose of this meeting is to give individuals an opportunity to express their views," the State Department said in a statement.

Activists opposed to the project are likely to flood what could prove a heated meeting, with some flying in from around the United States.

On March 1, the department released a draft environmental impact statement suggesting the rerouted pipeline, which would transport some 830,000 barrels a day, would have no major impact on the environment.

The statement examined how the 1,179-mile (1,897 km) pipeline could affect wildlife and surrounding areas as it travels from the [tar sands](#) of Alberta, Canada to refineries in Texas.

However, it stopped short of recommending that Obama approve the project.

Opponents and supporters now have until April 22 to comment after which a final recommendation will be drawn up.

Obama denied approval for the initial project last year in part due to criticism in Nebraska, where the proposed route would have crossed the Sandhills, an area of sensitive wetlands and extensive areas of [shallow groundwater](#).

But the new route submitted by TransCanada still crosses through about 1,000 bodies of water, activists say.

TransCanada has argued the project would bring much needed jobs and boost America's desire to be increasingly energy self-sufficient.

But the [State Department](#) report found that while some 42,100 jobs would be created over the one-to-two year construction period, it would lead to only 35 to 50 permanent jobs.

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