

Could Dakota Access pipeline move after permit is denied?

December 6 2016, by Josh Funk



Dan Nanamkin, of the Colville Nez Perce Native American tribe in Nespalem, Wash., right, drums with a procession through the Oceti Sakowin camp after it was announced that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers won't grant easement for the Dakota Access oil pipeline in Cannon Ball, N.D., Sunday, Dec. 4, 2016. (AP Photo/David Goldman)

The Army Corps of Engineers' refusal to grant a permit for the Dakota Access oil pipeline to cross beneath the Missouri River has focused more

attention on alternative routes, but several other options already have been considered and rejected as being more risky and expensive.

Some questions and answers about the Dakota Access [pipeline](#) and its route:

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE PIPELINE?

Nearly all of the 1,172-mile, \$3.8 billion pipeline has been built by Dallas-based Energy Transfer Partners except for a mile-long section across federal land and beneath Lake Oahe, a Missouri River reservoir. But the project is in limbo because the Corps suggested Sunday that it now needs a more detailed environmental review than it received initially.

The pipeline is designed to carry oil from North Dakota through South Dakota and Iowa to a shipping point in Patoka, Illinois. State regulators in all four states approved the route through their territory. The proposed route skirts the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation that straddles the North Dakota-South Dakota border, and the tribe objects to the project, saying it could threaten drinking water and destroy sacred sites.

ARE THERE OTHER ROUTES AVAILABLE?

The company examined other routes when federal regulators conducted their initial environmental review. Energy Transfer Partners and the Corps agreed initially that the proposed route appeared to be the safest and most cost-effective path. The initial review looked at factors including the number of water crossings, how close the route came to homes and whether it crossed wetlands.

In North Dakota, the Dakota Access route parallels the existing Northern Border Pipeline, which carries natural gas from Canada across the Dakotas to the Chicago area. The Dakota Access pipeline would use a nearly identical route to cross Lake Oahe near the Standing Rock reservation.

One alternative the company considered called for the pipeline to cross the Missouri River north of Bismarck, about 50 miles upstream of the current path. That option was rejected because it was 10 miles longer and required more water and road crossings. It was also estimated to cost \$22.6 million more than the current route.

DOES ANOTHER ROUTE HAVE SUPPORT?

Energy Transfer Partners doesn't want to reroute the pipeline, which was originally expected to be completed before the end of this year. The company says delaying the project a year would cost it \$1.4 billion in lost revenue. CEO Kelcy Warren told The Associated Press last month that the company doesn't see another way to complete the project besides the current route.

Standing Rock Sioux Chairman Dave Archambault has said the tribe does not oppose oil pipelines if they do not threaten water sources, environmentally sensitive areas or sacred sites. He said a route that would follow existing west-east and north-south oil pipeline corridors that avoid Missouri River crossings would be acceptable to him.

HOW WILL THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION AFFECT THE PROJECT?

President-elect Donald Trump wouldn't say Monday whether he will try to overturn the permit decision that has delayed the pipeline. Trump has said he supports the pipeline, and he holds stock in Energy Transfer Partners. Trump spokesman Jason Miller said the new administration would review the Corps' decision after it takes office in January.

WHAT ARE THE PIPELINE'S PROSPECTS?

Energy analyst Afolabi Ogunnaike with the Wood Mackenzie consulting firm said it appears to be a question of how long it takes for the project to regain approval and whether the [route](#) will have to be adjusted.

"Our expectation is that the Dakota Access pipeline will go forward. I think what's unclear is the path it will take and when it will start up," he said.

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