

Dakota pipeline company sues environmental groups

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Campers prepare for the Army Corp's deadline to leave the Oceti Sakowin protest camp on February 22, 2017 in Cannon Ball, North Dakota

The operator of a controversial US oil pipeline, which was the focus of months of protests by Native American tribes, on Tuesday sued several environmental groups, claiming they spread false information and incite violence.

Energy Transfer Partners launched broad accusations against Greenpeace and other environmental groups, alleging racketeering, defamation and inciting violence that amounted to "eco-terrorism" among other charges, for actions taken against the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Greenpeace rejected the claims, saying they amounted to "harassment by corporate bullies."

The \$3.8-billion, 1,172-mile (1,886-kilometer) [oil pipeline](#) was the focus of months-long protests in 2016 by dozens of North American tribes and environmental groups.

Their numbers at times swelling into the thousands, protestors camped on land in North Dakota near the pipeline's planned path under a river and man-made lake—the source of drinking water for the nearby Standing Rock Sioux tribe.

Among other accusations, the lawsuit claims environmental groups made false charges, including that the pipeline operator did not properly consult tribes near the route.

The environmental groups "manufacture sensational and grossly misrepresented causes designed exclusively to perpetuate and enrich" themselves through donations, the lawsuit alleged.

Greenpeace responded with its own broadside against the legal firm representing the pipeline operator, Kasowitz Benson Torres LLP. The firm's managing partner is US President Donald Trump's longtime attorney.

"This is the second consecutive year Donald Trump's go-to attorneys at the Kasowitz law firm have filed a meritless lawsuit against

Greenpeace," the non-profit's attorney Tom Wetterer said in a statement, adding that the lawsuit "repackages spurious allegations."

"They are apparently trying to market themselves as corporate mercenaries willing to abuse the legal system to silence legitimate advocacy work."

While the [pipeline](#) is now operating, the legal battle over its future remains unresolved.

In January, Trump issued an executive order directing federal officials to reconsider further delays in the project, which was quickly followed by the Army Corps of Engineers issuing final permits.

But a federal judge ordered a new environmental review in June, saying officials did not fully consider the effects of a possible oil spill on the fishing and hunting rights of the Standing Rock Sioux.

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