

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Application)	Application No. OP-003
of TransCanada Keystone Pipeline,)	Post-Hearing Brief
L.P., Calgary, Alberta seeking)	Wrexie Lainson Bardaglio
approval for Route Approval of the)	
Keystone XL Pipeline Project)	Entered: September 15, 2017
Pursuant to the Major Oil Pipeline)	
Siting Act.)	

Thank you for the opportunity to have participated in these hearings. As I have stated many times, once a Nebraskan, always a Nebraskan.

My testimony is about the Sandhill Cranes, the Central Flyway and the need for these magnificent birds to be protected. While many other species migrate with the cranes, none of them are as iconic to our state as the Sandhill Cranes.

Anyone from south central Nebraska around the shallow braided Platte River knows the thrill of the return every year of some 600,000 of these birds on their ways as far north as Siberia—the skies darken with their arrival, their cries like music to the ears of those who love and protect them.

The testimonies of other intervenors and renowned scientists have covered my concerns beautifully and I can't begin to improve on them. I was troubled by TransCanada's disrespect for witness Dr. Paul Johnsgard, Nebraska's internationally-acclaimed expert on Whooping Cranes and Sandhill Cranes. I ask the commissioners to consider that the testimony of a highly-credentialed scientist whose life's work on cranes has been conducted in situ transcends any

objections made by a foreign corporation with no familiarity with our state.

Accordingly, I plead with the commissioners to reject outright the Keystone XL Pipeline through Nebraska. All three proposed routes cross the Platte, and while the birds concentrate on a stretch of 80 miles or so, from somewhere west of Kearney to east of Grand Island, farmers and residents across the state and all along the river report sightings, as the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology map attached as an exhibit to my testimony shows. The protection of the habitat and the ancient, beautiful birds themselves are in Nebraska's best interests, economically as well as viscerally and historically, contrary to the vastly overstated assertions by TransCanada's partisans that the Keystone Pipeline is in Nebraska's best economic interests. A corporation which admits there are no plans to remove the pipe after its specified lifetime, a corporation which hired an "expert" witness offering no economic data from juried studies but rather recycled data from the pro-pipeline Consumer Energy Alliance—a Texas-based three-person industry lobbying group—and a corporation which also admits that their preferred route is the easiest and potentially most financially viable for them cannot be said to be offering anything in Nebraska's best interests. TransCanada has only one best interest, and that is the supposed financial gain to themselves and their shareholders—despite the increasing concerns from the financial services sector world-wide regarding stranded carbon assets. Is it worth the potential destruction of a state and national natural treasure that has been here for eons for a few more years' supply of dirty tar sands oil, which will not be

providing any real benefit to anyone in this country 50 years from now? This is the reality facing the fossil fuel industry, and a question I hope the commissioners will ask themselves.

Beyond the question of the real economic benefits to the state because of the fascination, lure and lore of the Sandhill Cranes and the burgeoning tourist and scientific communities' interests in them, these cranes define, in part, who we are as citizens of this state: we are stewards of the Creator's generous gifts of land and water, and resources such as the living things that depend on us as we depend on them, and we protect what we love.

In my seventy years, I've lived away from Nebraska for fifty-plus of them. But one thing that was and remains formative for me is this assessment: Nebraskans are persistent and resilient. Nebraskans understand how to steward the earth. Nebraskans understand relevancy of place: a farmer or rancher who doesn't understand winter, or where and why blowouts occur, or how to plant windbreaks won't make it. Transportation planners constructing the interstate had to understand the critical importance of installing blizzard barrier gates on strategic sections of the interstate. Farmers have to understand the nature of their soils—which vary vastly across the state, as several witnesses eloquently testified—in order to achieve successful harvests year after year. Besides considering the very real challenges of livelihoods built around food production and getting product to market, there are the larger and more intangible

considerations that I believe we all share: our state's vast prairies, open skies, and bountiful wildlife. We carry these defining characteristics with us in heart and mind wherever we go.

I'd like to ask you commissioners to think about this: when we protect what we love and understand, we protect what is life to us—the water from the Ogallala Aquifer that nourishes our fields and rivers and streams, our wildlife, our farms and ranches and our cities and towns. I would argue that the Sandhill Cranes fall into this same precious category: just as nowhere else on the planet is there a political subdivision such as our state wholly resting atop the largest freshwater aquifer in the world, so too is there nowhere else in the world on a slim 80 mile stretch of river habitat on a thousands-of-miles ancient migratory path where 600,000 thousand birds of one species navigate to each early spring.

I would be derelict if I didn't state again that the rest of the world yearns for our water, our Ogallala Aquifer, the one storing and cleansing and feeding the rich riverine network under, and sometimes literally on top of, Nebraska's soils. Surely you commissioners know this: the earth is running out of water. We in Nebraska, however, are not. Yet. Nebraska's water is Nebraska's gold. Water is life.

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There's no need to imperil Nebraska's bounteous and primordially-steady treasures—our Aquifer and our Sandhill Cranes—for a foreign corporation.

Please, just don't agree to this proposal. Say no and tell TransCanada to search their souls and go home. They need to beg forgiveness there in Alberta from Unci Maka, our Mother Earth. The long view of the tar sands mining operations as seen from Google Earth shows vast and horrendous defilement. Please, take another long view and protect our state for the generations to come, the ones I won't live to see, and those you won't live to see either. This will be your legacy: that you said no to TransCanada, and sent them back to Canada. You and I, and Nebraska and her seven generations will be just fine without them.

Respectfully submitted,

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