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More study needed on Bluegrass Pipeline, Kentucky Council of Churches urges

Brian Roewe | Dec. 5, 2013 Eco Catholic

A proposed pipeline through the Kentucky heartland needs more time and study, according to an coalition of Christian denominations in the Bluegrass State.

?We all, together and as individuals, have a moral duty to assess the impact of the proposed transport system on the health, safety and economic well-being of the people, flora and fauna of Kentucky, as well as present and future impacts on our land and water resources,? said the Kentucky Council of Churches, in a commentary published Thursday [1] at Kyforward.com.

The council includes 12 Christian denominations, including the four Catholic dioceses in the state, and represents roughly 800,000 people.

The pipeline in question, the Bluegrass Pipeline, would touch parts of 8 states as it carries natural gas liquids from Pennsylvania and Ohio, through a large portion of Kentucky, on its way to the Gulf Coast. The liquids, also known as NGLs, would then ship overseas for production of plastics, synthetics and rubber.

While the Council of Churches did not say it opposes the pipeline at this point, the Sisters of Loretto of Marion County, Ky., and the Trappist monks at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Trappist, Ky., have joined a grassroots movement to stop the pipeline?s construction. While the Loretto sisters have successfully blocked the pipeline?s proposed path from crossing their property, they continue to seek its blockage [2] in all of Kentucky.

[Read *NCR*?s previous coverage of the Lorettos? and Trappists? opposition to the pipeline [3].]

Instead, the council has urged further review before further development and land acquisition move forward. That includes close examination of the risks as well as the benefits a pipeline would carry along with its contents. Among the risks it pointed out was that the pipeline?s proposed construction route would carry toxic liquids across 700-plus surface waterways and any leakage-causing damage to it could contaminate drinking water and pollute nearby ecosystems.

?As of yet, there is no promise of a thorough impact study that would systematically pose and answer questions such as those we are raising,? the council said. ?This study is necessary to help the public and our representatives make good decisions. A matter of this seriousness requires a process of well-informed and transparent deliberation. We owe each other this respect.?

They called for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to lead such a review and produce an environmental impact statement for the project.

In addition, it advocated a guarantee of authoritative oversight, so that the ?lines of accountability are clear, and that the entity given oversight has the authority needed to ensure that accountability.? It requested state legislators establish a siting board to oversee any potential pipeline and impose conditions to mitigate any risks

associated with it.

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Links:
[1] http://www.kyforward.com/our-town-square/2013/12/commentary-kentucky-council-of-churches-speaks-out-on-proposed-bluegrass-pipeline/
[2] http://www.wkyt.com/news/kynewsmakers/headlines/Nuns-continue-to-fight-against-Bluegrass-Pipeline-230682691.html
[3] http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/lorettos-resist-proposed-pipeline