



Pipelines!

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How much effort to spend fighting pipelines? What is the best use of our time and resources? On one hand, educating lawmakers and the public about the merits of a rising carbon fee is crucial. Once enacted, a rising carbon fee will make the most carbon-intensive energy sources uneconomic. Oil derived from tar sands or tar shale is high on the list of the most carbon-rich.

However, as part of my testimony last week to the Illinois Commerce Commission, in opposition to the proposed expansion of the Dakota Access pipeline, I did a calculation of the amount of CO₂ that will be released by the additional crude oil, if the pipeline capacity is increased from 570,000 bpd (barrels per day) to 1,100,000 bpd. The additional CO₂ emitted is equivalent to fifteen 1,000-megawatt coal plants.

The lawyers asked the question “If the proposed expansion does not occur, won’t refiners find other sources of crude?” The real question, it seems to me, is whether the Illinois Commerce Commission will pave the way for expanded use of this exceptionally harmful fuel or whether, by making the right choice, the Commission will exercise leadership that other authorities can emulate, which decisions, in combination, will function to restrict full exploitation of this carbon-intensive crude.

Stopping pipelines is difficult. Yet climate science is clear. Most of the additional CO₂ pumped into the air will need to be extracted, somehow, if we are to maintain shorelines and an hospitable climate for future generations. Just slowing approval of pipelines has merit. If construction is delayed long enough to allow governments to come to their senses, we may prevent some pipelines from ever being built.

My testimony to the Illinois Commerce Commission is available [here](#).

We have launched a new CSAS Columbia website: <https://csas.earth.columbia.edu/> The old website will soon be closed and redirected to the new one. CSAS is funded 100 percent by the public. Our continued work depends on your support, which is much appreciated. Columbia University provides a direct online giving option. Other giving options and full instructions are available on our new Giving page.

We especially appreciate any support prior to 15 December, as we face that deadline for finding support to continue our program into 2020.