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August 11, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary,

As you are well aware, climate change is one of the most pressing problems facing the health of our planet. You and the President have both recognized the importance of addressing climate change, and the President has made tackling carbon pollution a top priority. On June 25 of last year, President Obama made a commitment to reduce our nation's carbon pollution by 17% by 2020.

In that speech, President Obama also committed to reject the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline if it would "significantly exacerbate the problem of carbon pollution." Tar sands are a landlocked resource that are at least 17% more carbon intensive than conventional oil on a life cycle basis. Pipelines are the lynchpin for massive tar sands expansion the climate cannot afford if we are to preserve a stable climate for future generations.

In comments to the State Department, environmental groups, including many signed on hereto, have provided substantial evidence that Keystone XL will exacerbate carbon pollution and should be denied. But Keystone is not the only tar sands pipeline your Department is reviewing. It is also considering the expansion of the Alberta Clipper tar sands pipeline into the Midwest and may be considering other projects as well, such as Line 3, another line expansion proposal that would service the Midwest. As the State Department evaluates these projects, they must not only consider the carbon polluting impact of each project but also the cumulative impact of multiple projects.

To be clear, an overwhelming body of evidence demonstrates that as an independent project, Keystone XL would be a major linchpin to expand tar sands development and lead to a significant increase in carbon emissions. However, as the State Department also considers a Presidential permit to expand the Alberta Clipper tar sands pipeline, it must consider the potential cumulative climate impact from both pipelines.

This need was discussed in a recent article in the esteemed journal *Nature*, where eight scientists and economists wrote of the importance of ensuring major tar sands infrastructure projects were considered collectively. The experts correctly explained that “incremental decisions create[] the misguided idea that oil-sands expansion is inevitable” and that “[b]y restricting the range of choices, governments have allowed corporations to profit from one-off policy decisions, leading to a doubling of oil-sands production in Alberta in the past decade, with production forecast to double again to 3.9 million barrels per day in the coming decade. The collective result of these decisions is unnecessarily high social, economic and environmental costs.”

The experts concluded that, “When judged in isolation, the costs, benefits and consequences of a particular oil-sands proposal may be deemed acceptable. But impacts mount with multiple projects.” Failing to evaluate the mounting impacts of these multiple projects would “demonstrate[] flawed policies and failed leadership. With such high stakes, our nations and the world cannot afford a series of ad hoc, fragmented decisions.”

The Alberta Clipper Expansion Project would nearly double the capacity of the existing Alberta Clipper pipeline from 450,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 800,000 bpd. An expansion of Line 3 would also expand an existing international pipeline to bring up to 760,000 bpd of tar sands through the Great Lakes region. The tar sands industry has also given strong indications it desires to reverse a cross-border pipeline in New England to bring up to 600,000 bpd of tar sands from Canada to Portland, Maine.

If allowed, these pipelines will spur tar sands expansion. The tar sands industry depends on pipelines to get its product to market. Without them, it is far more likely tar sands will stay in the ground. As the experts writing in *Nature* urge, decisions on infrastructure projects like Alberta Clipper and Line 3 must be “made in the context of an overarching commitment to limit carbon emissions.”¹

We urge the State Department to consider the massive cumulative climate impacts of the Alberta Clipper expansion, Keystone XL and other reasonably foreseeable pipelines, and make a decision to approve or deny these projects that is consistent with the President’s carbon reduction goals. The cumulative climate effects of the Alberta Clipper expansion, Keystone XL, and other tar sands infrastructure projects must be evaluated before we are locked into decades of economic and environmental damage. Given the serious climate impacts of enabling tar sands expansion, we believe such an analysis will lead to a conclusion that the Alberta Clipper expansion, Keystone XL and other similar pipelines must be denied.

¹ Palen, Wendy J., *et al.* “Consider the global impacts of oil pipelines.” *Nature*. 510, 466-467 (2014).

The administration's commitment to aggressive greenhouse gas reduction policies simply cannot be squared with a piecemeal approach to tar sands infrastructure permitting. The Department can only understand the true climate impacts of these pipelines by analyzing their cumulative growth-inducing effect on tar sands development.

Sincerely,

/s/ Doug Hayes

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