

Casco is First Maine Town to Pass Resolution Opposing Sending Tar Sands Oil Through Town and Region

Saturday January 12th, 2013

Casco, ME – Casco residents voted today to pass a municipal resolution stating opposition to sending tar sands oil through Exxon Mobil's Portland-Montreal Pipeline, making it the first Maine town to publically and officially oppose the proposal. The 62-year-old pipeline, which stretches 236 miles from Montreal to South Portland, is being considered for the transport of tar sands, a form of toxic, thick, heavy oil that is associated with higher incidence of pipeline spills and can be nearly impossible to clean up. The pipeline stretches through Casco along the Crooked River, passing by Pleasant Lake and Parker Pond as it heads for Sebago Lake.

"The people of Casco have spoken", says Casco select board chair Mary Fernandes. "We feel as a town that transporting tar sands oil through the Portland-Montreal pipeline poses unpredictable risks to the health, safety, natural resources, property and economic welfare of Casco residents."

The resolution stated concerns about the environmental and public health hazards of tar sands in the context of a town and region heavily dependent on a clean environment for recreation, tourism, and the economy at large. Concerns about threats to water quality also motivated the resolution.

"I've been guiding on the Crooked River and other pristine Maine waters for years," said Brooke Hiddell a Registered Maine Guide and Casco resident. "Maine's large outdoor recreation industry depends on clean, healthy waters for salmon, brook trout, and other species—and an increased risk of an oil spill into these waters from tar sands oil being forced through Maine's aging pipeline would be devastating to the entire Sebago Lake watershed."

"Given how vital a clean environment and especially clean water are to our citizens and our economy, it's not surprising this resolution had such strong support," says Grant Plummer, owner of Fieldstone Builders Inc. in Casco and Casco select board member. "I think a lot of people reached the conclusion that putting tar sands through this pipe would provide only risks—to our people and economy—and no real benefit to the town or the state."

The resolution was submitted by Casco residents who have become increasingly concerned about the threat of tar sands oil to the local environment and economy. Casco residents collected 340 signatures at the polls in November to put the resolution on the ballot for today's special town meeting.

"I have been heartened to see many of our neighbors learning about this issue and working together to protect our water resources," says Casco resident Connie Cross. "The resolution passed today is the result of months of hard work by concerned Casco residents."

The resolution calls upon elected leaders to help ensure any tar sands pipeline proposal gets a complete environmental impact review, something that can be required by the U.S. State Department for cross-border pipelines. More than 50 towns along the pipeline route in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont are considering similar resolutions.

"We congratulate the town and citizens of Casco on passing this important resolution," said Todd Martin, Outreach Coordinator for the Natural Resources Council of Maine. "Once you learn about tar sands and pipelines, it's not hard to see that it would be a bad deal for Maine. We expect Casco will be the first of many towns along the pipeline to speak out."

TOWN OF CASCO

A RESOLUTION TO PROTECT THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF LOCAL CITIZENS, WATER BODIES AND OTHER NATURAL RESOURCES IN RELATION TO THE POSSIBLE TRANSPORT OF TAR SANDS OIL THROUGH MAINE

WHEREAS, Casco has previously supported local, state and/or federal actions to safeguard human health, ensure the safety of citizens, and protect the environment; and

WHEREAS, Casco benefits immensely from the pristine lakes, streams, and ponds that define our region, and particularly the Crooked River, which have for generations provided recreation for residents and tourists alike and which enhance property values and generate substantial economic activity that sustains jobs; and

WHEREAS the Casco Comprehensive Plan (2003) confirmed that Casco's water resources are of primary importance to its residents, that protecting natural resources was the most important goal for the Town of Casco, and that the top three resources were 1) lakes and ponds, 2) groundwater, and 3) rivers, streams and wetlands; and

WHEREAS, the oil industry appears to plan to use an aging oil pipeline, built in 1950, to bring Canadian tar sands diluted bitumen through the Lakes Region to Casco Bay for export, even though the pipeline passes next to Sebago Lake and numerous other lakes, ponds, and streams in the Lakes Region and crosses the Crooked River and Androscoggin River in numerous places; and

WHEREAS, pipelines carrying tar sands have a three-times greater likelihood than the current oil pipelines of leaks and spills because of the corrosive properties of tar sands and the higher temperatures and pressures involved in pumping the viscous substance through pipelines; and

WHEREAS, tar sands spills are more dangerous and more difficult to clean up than conventional oil spills; and

WHEREAS, in 2010 a pipeline spilled more than a million gallons of diluted tar sands down a 30-mile stretch of the Kalamazoo River in Michigan, creating a public safety, health, and environmental disaster with continuing, long-lasting impacts; and

WHEREAS, mining and processing of tar sands in the Canadian boreal forest requires a vast and destructive industrial operation, emits three to five times more carbon pollution per barrel than the production of a barrel of conventional U.S. crude oil, and causes many other problems; and

WHEREAS, the transport of tar sands oil to and through Oxford and Cumberland counties in the state of Maine creates unreasonable risks to the health, safety, natural resources, property and economic welfare of persons living in Casco;

WHEREAS, the transport of tar sands oil to and through Oxford and Cumberland counties in the state of Maine would not create or sustain many new jobs for Maine people since the necessary infrastructure is already built and in the ground;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that through the adoption of this resolution, the Town of Casco expresses its opposition to the transport of tar sands oil through Maine and its deep concern about the risks that such transport create in relation to public health and safety, property values, and the clean natural resources upon which the local community depends; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town of Casco calls upon the Maine State Legislature and the United States Congress to ensure there will be thorough environmental impact reviews of tar sands diluted bitumen pipeline proposals, including a complete evaluation of the health and safety impacts of potential tar sands oil spills; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town of Casco supports the creation of clear Federal and State guidelines for tracking the origins and chemical composition of various types of fuel so that local governments, citizens, and first responders can better know of, and plan for, the risks associated with the specific type of fuel flowing through or to their communities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town of Casco encourages the State of Maine and other states in the northeast to support policies, including a regional Clean Fuels Standard, that will help shift oil use away from

high impact fuels such as those from tar sands and toward cleaner energy options available in Maine and the region; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town of Casco transmit a copy of this resolution to the President of the United States, U.S. Secretary of State, U.S. Secretary of Energy, U.S. Secretary of Interior, Chair of the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee, Chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Maine State Congressional delegation, Governors of Delaware, Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont, CEO of Portland Pipe Line Corporation, CEO of Montreal Pipe Line Limited, CEO of Imperial Oil Incorporated, CEO of Exxon Mobil, CEO of Enbridge Inc., Prime Minister of Canada, and the Provincial Premiers of Canada.

PASSED by the Casco Town Meeting this ____ day of _____, 2013.

Town Clerk, Town of Casco _____