News
EarthBeat



Faith leaders join the Treaty People Gathering June 5-8 in northern Minnesota to protest construction of the Enbridge Line 3 oil pipeline. (GreenFaith)



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Editor's Note: *EarthBeat Weekly is your weekly newsletter about faith and climate change. Below is the June 11 edition. To receive EarthBeat Weekly in your inbox, sign up here.*

Infrastructure has been in the news this week, and people of faith have been at the forefront.

On Thursday, a rally in Washington, D.C., which sought to bring together 100 faith leaders in support of President Joe Biden's measures to green the country's infrastructure and shift to 100% clean energy, actually drew 102, as NCR environment correspondent Brian Roewe reports.

That June 9 event was one of a series of activities in which people of faith urged the administration not to back down on its pledges to address climate change through infrastructure investments, despite pushback from Republicans in Congress.

In addition, the Evangelical Environment Network organized a letter, signed by more than 100 pastors, professors and others, urging congressional leaders "to support historic levels of investment that will safeguard creation, defend our children's health, address the impacts of climate change and pollution from fossil fuel extraction and related industries, and fulfill our moral obligation to leave a healthy world for future generations."

And also on June 9, TC Energy Corp., the Canadian company behind the Keystone XL pipeline intended to transport oil to Texas from the tar sands in Alberta, Canada, announced it was canceling the project.

"After more than 10 years of organizing we have finally defeated an oil giant, Keystone XL is dead!" the Indigenous Environmental Network said in a statement. "We are dancing in our hearts because of this victory! From Dene territories in Northern Alberta to Indigenous lands along the Gulf of Mexico, we stood hand-in-

hand to protect the next seven generations of life, the water and our communities from this dirty tar sands pipeline."

The group added, however, that it would keep fighting pipeline projects. One of those battles played out earlier in the week, when faith leaders joined Indigenous people and environmental activists in northern Minnesota to protest the continuing construction of Enbridge's Line 3, another transnational pipeline. Line 3 is intended to replace and expand an existing pipeline along a route that crosses or passes near Indigenous lands. At least 200 demonstrators were arrested, and opponents of the project vowed to fight on.

"It is striking to see miles of pipeline laid out at the same time as we need to be reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and setting a 100% clean energy target," the Rev. Susan Hendershot, president of the climate coalition Interfaith Power & Light, wrote in an email to EarthBeat.

That sentiment could be echoed around the world. Here in Peru, where I live, a half-century of oil production has left a toxic legacy in the country's northeastern Amazon region, in watersheds inhabited mainly by Indigenous peoples. The same is true in Ecuador, where communities won a court case but have yet to see compensation or cleanup.

In Africa, a study in Nigeria found higher rates of infant death among children of women who were exposed to oil spills while pregnant. Nevertheless, construction of a $3.5 billion heated oil pipeline from Uganda's oil fields to the Tanzanian coast continues despite protests, and plans are under way for new oil drilling in Namibia and Botswana.

Hendershot's words about Line 3 could just as easily apply to Indigenous communities around the world that must live with the impacts of oil pipelines: "And of course the same communities that are bearing the brunt of fossil fuel pollution are being asked to bear the risk of the pipeline polluting their waterways and sacred wild rice harvest."

She added, "It is a moral travesty when one believes in the sacredness of the air, the water, and the soil. By moving to 100% clean energy these projects will no longer be considered necessary or viable."

Honors for EarthBeat:

Here at EarthBeat, we always strive to bring you high-quality coverage, and it's gratifying when others tell us we hit the mark. EarthBeat came away from the Catholic Media Association's virtual awards ceremony June 10 with more than half a dozen awards.

Roewe won first place for his feature about the first Earth Day celebration, third place for his report on *Laudato Si'* at five years and honorable mention for coverage of Catholic divestment from fossil fuels. Freelancer Claire Schaeffer-Duffy won first place for her story about a woman fighting for environmental justice in Louisiana; and my story about the Synod for the Amazon, one year later, took second place.

In photography, Paul Jeffrey earned a first-place award for his Lens on Creation reflections, and Sean Hawkey won second place for his photo essay about Christmas in Honduras in the wake of two devastating hurricanes.

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Also in the news on EarthBeat this week:

- Catholic bishops in the United Kingdom urged world leaders gathered there for the G7 summit to ensure "a sustainable future for our global community" in their economic responses to the interlinked global challenges of the coronavirus pandemic and climate change, Roewe reports.
- Church groups in Panama are demanding that the government reverse its approval for mining in a forested area near Indigenous communities and that it protect the rights of communities affected by development projects.
- Roewe reports that Japanese automaker Nissan presented the Vatican with its all-electric Leaf sedan at a ceremony on June 5, World Environment Day. The gift aimed to help the Vatican toward its goal of gradually replacing its fleet of service vehicles with electric alternatives. He also also takes a behind-the-scenes look at the work being done by the many Catholic individuals and organizations that are part of the Vatican's worldwide consultation on the Laudato Si' Action Platform, which was introduced in May, before its full launch in October.

- The transition to a more sustainable world is "the new frontier for religious," who have a "prophetic role" to play, Sr. Sheila Kinsey, who heads the Sowing Hope for the Planet campaign for the International Union of Superiors General, the global organization that represents the majority of the world's 600,000 sisters, said June 9 at an online gathering. Chris Herlinger has the story for Global Sisters Report.

- Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister writes that the tragedy of Earth's drastically warming climate is "that it happened in our time. To us. Because of us. By us, for us, and with little or no attention to the creeping self-destruction of it all." Each of us must do our part, she writes: "Pick one thing. Do it. And know then, that you were there in soul when the Scripture required us to 'tend the garden and keep it.'"

And in other climate news this week:

- Drought and climate change are combining to shrink water supplies in the western U.S., foreshadowing a future scenario for which the region's complex system of water rights is not prepared, reports Lauren Sommer at NPR.

- A new United Nations report says climate change and biodiversity loss are intertwined problems that must be tackled together, and warns that certain fixes proposed for global warming could hasten the extinction of some animal and plant species. Seth Borenstein and Christina Larson have the story for The Associated Press.

- Sheryl Lee Tian Tong at Mongabay reports on a new study showing that Chinese banks and investors poured more than $22.5 billion between 2013 and 2020 into companies that produce and trade products linked to deforestation around the world, such as soy, beef and palm oil.

- In Alaska, a Native group has partnered with a nonprofit environmental organization to block future development on more than 44,000 acres of land near Bristol Bay, including a critical transport route for the proposed Pebble Mine gold and copper project, report Joshua Partlow and Juliet Eilperin at The Washington Post.

- And in the Wall Street Journal, Sarah McFarlane documents the "rocky path" the Danish company Ørsted AS has taken from major oil company to the world's largest developer of offshore wind energy.

Upcoming events:

The coming week will bring a virtual symposium on science, ethics and religion; reflection on the writings of Passionist Fr. Thomas Berry; and a session for those considering becoming activist investors.

You can find more information about these and other activities on the EarthBeat Events page.

Closing beat:

Although we're proud of the awards our coverage won for stories we published in 2020, our sights are fixed on the future.

Now that we're almost halfway through 2021 it seems like a good time to ask: What other topics would you like us to write about? Drop us a line at earthbeat@ncronline.org and let us know. We'll take those suggestions into account as we plan our coverage for the rest of the year.

If you know of someone who'd appreciate EarthBeat, please forward this email or pass along the link to EarthBeat Weekly on our website. Thank you for reading EarthBeat!

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