

Environmental Impact Assessments of the Keystone XL Project and the “Melting of Glaciers”

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A controversial government contractor once again finds itself in hot water, or in this case, melting glacier water.

[TransCanada](#) chose Environmental Resources Management Group (ERM) as one of its contractors to conduct the environmental impact statement for [Keystone XL](#) on behalf of the U.S. State Department. ERM Group also happens to have green-lighted a [gold mining project in central Asia that is now melting glaciers](#).

[ERM Group](#) has a [penchant](#) for [rubber-stamping projects](#) that [have had](#) tragic [environmental and public health legacies](#). For example, ERM formerly worked [on behalf of the tobacco industry](#) to pitch the safety of its deadly product.

A January 2014 [study about Keystone XL’s climate change impacts](#) published in the journal Nature Climate Change paints a drastically different picture than ERMGroup’s Keystone XL [tar sands](#) study.

The [Kumtor Gold Mine](#), owned by [Centerra Gold/Cameco Corporation](#), was provided a stamp of approval from [ERM Group](#) in October 2012. Similar to the TransCanada arrangement with the State Department on Keystone XL, Centerra served as the funder of the report evaluating its own project.



“The mine sits at an altitude of 4,000 meters above sea level, in the Tien Shan mountain range and among some of Kyrgyzstan’s - and the region’s - most important glaciers,” explained an [October 28 story published in Asia Times](#).

“Centerra Gold has consistently dismissed as untrue that operations at Kumtor have had negative implications for the glaciers, which are reportedly melting with observable speed due to years of dumping rock tailings onto the ice sheet. The Canadian company has backed its position with expert evaluations from consultancies such as Environmental Resources Management.”

DeSmogBlog’s finding comes in the aftermath of the [U.S. House of Representatives voting to authorize](#) the Alberta to Cushing, Oklahoma [KeystoneXL northern leg](#), with a [vote in the U.S. Senate to follow on November](#).

Josh Earnest, White House press secretary, hinted [President Barack Obama will veto the bill if it arrives at his desk](#), with Obama also sounding as if a veto looms in a recent

public appearance.

“I have to constantly push back against the idea that Keystone is either a massive jobs bill for the U.S. or is somehow lowering gas prices,” [said Obama](#). “Understand what the project is, it will provide the ability for Canada to pump their oil and send it through their land down to the Gulf where it will be sold everywhere else.”

Bill Promoters Cite ERM Report

Promoters of the latest legislative push to ram through Keystone XL North have cited ERM’s State Department report as a reason for why Obama should sign off on the bill.

“The time for excuses is over,” the head of the [American Petroleum Institute](#) (API), [Jack Gerard](#), said at an [API-sponsored panel convened by The Hill](#) (beginning at about 4:42 in the video). “This has been in the process for six years and has gone through five comprehensive environmental reviews and somehow [there is] this excuse that we’ve got to let the [permitting] process continue.”

[Broadcast live streaming video on Ustream](#)

U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.), [sponsor of the Senate bill](#) and [in the midst of a run-off vote election](#) against [U.S. Rep. Bill Cassidy \(R-La.\) — sponsor of the House-version](#) of the bill — [sang a similar tune about the ERM study at a press conference](#).

“This project has cleared every environmental hurdle and it has met the complete environmental review,” [Landrieu stated](#) in listing off the reasons why the pipeline should be approved.

The [sponsor of another Senate bill](#) introduced in May calling for the approval of Keystone XL North, U.S. John Hoeven (R-ND), also cited ERM’s State Department report in addressing the full Senate floor on November 13.

“[T]he final environmental impact statement...stated the project will have have no significant environmental impact [and] stated that very clearly,” [said Hoeven](#).

“Hail Mary”

The [Landrieu-Cassidy run-off](#) has become what [Houston Chronicle energy reporter Jennifer Dlouhy](#) called a “Hail Mary” for both of them at The Hill event.

“There is no more vivid example that elections matter than the Keystone XL pipeline,” [said Dlouhy](#) (beginning at 33:33). “Both Representative Cassidy and Senator Landrieu are fighting to claim the title of the oil industry’s biggest champion, as well as that seat, and both view Keystone XL as their Hail Mary.”

But if Big Oil catches the [Hail Mary pass](#) and runs the ball into the end-zone, it will mean more melting glaciers in the Arctic at the hands of climate disruption, caused by the tar sands production Keystone XL North will incentivize.

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