

from our viewpoint...

Digging into truth about Keystone

Plans to build a 1,700 miles pipeline from Canada to Texas took a sidestep last week when President Barack Obama decided to delay the project based on questions about the route the pipeline is to take across the middle of the country.

The \$7 billion project by TransCanada would carry unrefined oil tar sands from Canada down to refineries along the Gulf of Mexico before it is exported.

Claims have been made the Keystone project would create thousands of jobs during the construction phase lasting about two years, and then thousands more over the next 30 years.

Republicans pressured Obama into making a decision by tying the Keystone project to the extension of the payroll tax cut approved in December. That extension was for two months, and with Keystone delayed House Speaker John Boehner is expected to try to tie approval of the project to the extension of the payroll tax cut for the rest of this year.

"The Keystone pipeline is the prime example of a shovel-ready project that has been through every approval process here in Washington," Boehner told Fox News last Sunday. "Every option is on the table. We are going to do everything we can to try to make sure this Keystone pipeline is, in fact, approved."

With the announcement of Obama's opposition to the Keystone pipeline the Canadians are threatening to take their oil and sell it to Asia. The problem is Canadians in the western portion of their country are not in favor of a Pacific pipeline for this project.

The environmentalists feel the tar sands from Alberta are the most costly source of oil, creating large pools of toxic waste when extracted and producing more greenhouse gases in the refining process. The tar sand is considered corrosive and likely to cause leaks in the pipeline, endangering aquifers and wildlife.

One of the major obstacles to the pipeline at present is the state of Nebraska wants to change the route to move the project to the east and out of the sensitive sandhill area.

Building pipelines across our country are not new as the Cheyenne gas pipeline crosses the southern corner of Sherman County as it goes across the western part of Kansas. When it was being buried several years ago, a group of welders, diggers and other construction workers stayed in Goodland for a few months, and now it is hard to even trace where the route is except by air and the occasional markers.

Gas pipelines are different from the Canadian tar sands because it is not considered as corrosive, and leaks are less likely to create permanent damage to the water supplies.

A tar sands pipeline spilled a million gallons of toxic heavy oil into Michigan's Kalamazoo River last summer illustrating the dangers this type of uniquely corrosive oil will bring along the Keystone XL route.

The U.S. State Department estimates the pipeline would create at most 6,500 temporary construction jobs, and would leave only "hundreds" of permanent jobs. TransCanada, the Canadian company that wants to build the pipeline, claims the pipeline would employ tens or even hundreds of thousands of people.

It is expected once Nebraska completes a survey to reroute the pipeline another national review will find a way to approve the construction.

There are other questions about the advisability of building the pipeline, but the major one we see is it would seem better to use the \$7 billion to build a refinery closer to the source and then transport the refined oil through existing pipelines and avoid the questions about potential damage to the major water supply for the center of the country. — Tom Betz



Growing up is a different experience today

We sang Happy Birthday to a young lady at Rotary the other day. There were a couple dozen of us, and we were off key and out of synch. Really off key and out of synch.

She put her hand over her eyes and her head on the table.

I'm not sure if she was critiquing our singing or just totally embarrassed. She was to turn 18 the next day. Singing that song badly, really badly, is a club tradition.

I got to thinking about her world and mine, the day when I turned 18.

Back in 1966, the biggest event of our lifetime had been the death of John F. Kennedy. Everyone could tell you where they were when JFK was killed in Dallas.

I suppose for my mother and father, it was Pearl Harbor.

And for my young friend, it's probably 9-11 and the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

When I turned 18, it was legal for me to drink a beer, but not liquor. However, I couldn't vote.



cynthia haynes

• open season

I remember being really annoyed that my sister, who is six years younger than I am, got to vote for president the same year I did. They changed the law from 21 to 18, and I was born in 1948, a presidential year. So at 20, I was too young in 1968, and by 1972, the voting age was 18. I was 24 and my little sister was 18.

I never smoked, but I could have started buying cigarettes just about any time I wanted. I remember my parents, who did smoke, giving me a quarter to buy a pack of Pall Malls out of a vending machine.

It wasn't legal for minors to buy out of the machine then, but who was going to stop me?

Yes, I remember buying alcohol before I was 21. I never did like beer. We would put the bottle on the window ledge outside our

dorm room so that it wouldn't be found by the residence hall director. But, then, I never remember anyone ever checking for alcohol in our rooms, either.

Today, my young friend could go to jail for many of the silly stunts I pulled back then.

Times have changed, and whether it's for better or worse, I can't say.

That dorm room didn't have a telephone or a television. My only plug-in devices were a clock radio and a hair dryer. I wore a dress to class every day and was addressed as Miss Desilet. No one had yet heard of women's liberation, and as a pharmacy student, I was one of just six women in a class of 60. Today, more than half the classes are women.

I didn't own a car or ride in an airplane until after I was married.

Sometimes, I miss those days when we had less but were somewhat freer. Then my cell phone rings, and that's the end of my philosophizing for awhile.

"Happy Birthday," Serena.

Work, wonder and worry

A recent swing through northwestern Kansas reveals a winter wheat crop that looks really good. Stands are uniform, the color is a dark green and even with the mild temperatures so far this winter, most of the wheat has not grown too quickly and may escape the specter of winter kill.

Even in southwestern Kansas, the region hit hardest last year, the wheat crop looks good. Favorable growing conditions began the end of September and early October when this year's crop was being planted.

Rains from three to six inches were reported in much of southwestern Kansas, although some of the cropland near Elkhart, Sublette, Satanta and Meade didn't receive plentiful rainfall.

A similar weather pattern swept through this part of the state a week before Christmas. More than a foot of snow blanketed a large area of southwestern Kansas from northern Morton County north to Syracuse and east all the way to Ellis County where 14 - was reported at Victoria.

Scott City recorded 15" of snow and moisture totaled six inches or more from the rain and snow that stayed on the ground throughout half of January.

Wheat growers remain optimistic this year's wheat crop is far better off than one year ago. The significant rainfall and snow will go a long way in helping this year's crop enter the spring



Insight this week

• john schlageck

growing season with a leg up.

Most long-term forecasts predict normal precipitation throughout the upcoming spring season with another dry summer. Should this hold true, this year's wheat crop will at least have a better chance than last year of being harvested. With a few timely rains in February and March there may be far fewer acres abandoned if any.

Many southwestern Kansas producers consider the current condition of their wheat crop ideal at this time. Because of the month-long snow cover, most of the crop hasn't broken dormancy yet. Temperatures have been cooler than in other regions of Kansas where record high winter temperatures have been recorded.

Less growth than normal means healthier wheat at this time. There's less chance the crop will green up, grow and then face the possibility of being hammered by freeze this spring when it begins to warm up.

Drive through southwestern Kansas and one thing becomes apparent quickly and that's the amount of wheat in the fields. This year's

acreage is tabbed at 9.5 million acres up from 8.7 million in 2011.

As already stated, planting conditions overall were much better this year than last. High wheat prices have driven this increase, but continued dryness in some areas of the central and southern Plains led to more wheat planted. Compared to more thirsty crops like corn, milo and soybeans, wheat tends to survive drought while producing a decent crop.

Subsoil moisture remains a concern for every farmer throughout much of western Kansas. Shortfalls vary from almost no subsoil moisture in the south-western counties to several inches in some of the northern tier Kansas counties.

Yes, it's a new year and with it comes new hope of harvest in June. While all farmers know that's a lifetime away, as eternal optimists they'll hope and pray for moisture, better-than-average growing conditions and hail storms that stay away from their land. And once they harvest the wheat, they begin wondering, worrying and wishing for a successful fall harvest.

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