

# Army Corps told to approve Dakota pipeline

Easement could be approved within days, says senator

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The Army Corps of Engineers was ordered to allow construction of the Dakota Access pipeline to proceed under a disputed Missouri River crossing, North Dakota Sen. John Hoeven said on Tuesday, the latest twist in a months-long legal battle over the \$3.8 billion project.

The Standing Rock Sioux, whose opposition to the project attracted thousands of supporters from around the country to North Dakota, immediately vowed to again go to court to stop it.

Hoeven announced late Tuesday that the acting Secretary of the Army, Robert Speer, had directed the Army Corps of Engineers to "proceed" with an easement necessary to complete the pipeline. Hoeven said he also spoke with Vice President Mike Pence, just a week after President Donald Trump signed an executive order signaling his support for the project.

A spokesman for the U.S. Army did not immediately respond to requests for comment Tuesday night. Hoeven spokesman Don Canton says that Speer's move means the easement "isn't quite issued yet, but they plan to approve it" within days.

The crossing under Lake Oahe, a wide section of the



Tom Stromme/The Bismarck Tribune via AP, File  
In this Oct. 10, 2016, file photo, law enforcement officers, left, drag a person from a protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline, near the town of St. Anthony in rural Morton County, N.D.

Missouri River in southern North Dakota, is the final big chunk of work on the four-state, \$3.8 billion pipeline to carry North Dakota oil through South Dakota and Iowa to Illinois. President Donald Trump on Jan. 24 called on the Army Corps of Engineers to reconsider its December decision to withhold permission until more study is done on the crossing.

The pipeline has been the target of months of protests led by the Standing Rock Sioux, whose reservation lies near the pipeline's route and who have argued that it's a threat to water.

The tribe has vowed to challenge any granting of the easement in court, and Chairman Dave Archambault renewed that vow Tuesday

night. "If it does become a done deal in the next few days, we'll take it to the judicial system," Archambault said. He added: "This is a good indicator of what this country is going to be up against in the next four years. So America has to brace itself."

The developer, Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners, says the pipeline would be safe.

An environmental assessment conducted last year determined the crossing would not have a significant impact on the environment. However, then-Assistant Army Secretary for Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy on Dec. 4 declined to issue an easement, saying a broader environmental study was

warranted in the wake of opposition by the Standing Rock Sioux.

Energy Transfer Partners called Darcy's decision politically motivated and accused then-President Barack Obama's administration of delaying the matter until he left office. Two days before he left the White House, the Corps launched a study of the crossing that could take up to two years to complete.

President Donald Trump on Jan. 24 — just four days after he took office — signed an executive action telling the Corps to quickly reconsider the Dec. 4 decision.

The company appears poised to begin drilling under the lake immediately. Workers have already drilled entry and exit holes for the Oahe crossing, and the company has put oil in the pipeline leading up to the lake in anticipation of finishing the project, its executive vice president Joey Mahmoud said in court documents filed earlier this month.

Hundreds and at times thousands of pipeline opponents who have dubbed themselves "water protectors" have camped on federal land near the crossing site since last August, often clashing with police and prompting more than 625 arrests. The camp's population has thinned to fewer than 300 due to harsh winter weather and a plea by Standing Rock Chairman Dave Archambault for the camp to disband before the spring flooding season.

## A timeline of events

**December 2014** — Dallas-based Energy Transfer Partners applies to the federal government to build the 1,200-mile Dakota Access pipeline to carry North Dakota oil through South Dakota and Iowa to an existing pipeline in Illinois. The pipeline is projected to carry half a million barrels of oil daily. The proposed route skirts the Standing Rock Sioux tribe's reservation and crosses under Lake Oahe, a Missouri River reservoir in North Dakota that serves as the tribe's drinking water source.

**March 2016** — Iowa regulators approve the pipeline, making it the fourth and final state to grant permission.

**April 2016** — Opponents establish a camp at the confluence of the Cannonball and Missouri rivers in southern North Dakota for peaceful protest. Camps in the area would later swell to thousands of people.

**July 2016** — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers grants pipeline permits at more than 200 water crossings. The Standing Rock Sioux sues a day later. The Cheyenne River Sioux later join the lawsuit as plaintiffs.

**Aug. 10** — North Dakota authorities make the first arrests of protesters. The total has since surpassed 600, including actress Shailene Woodley and Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein.

**Sept. 9** — U.S. District Court Judge James Boasberg denies an attempt by the Standing Rock Sioux to halt pipeline construction. The same day, the Army, the Department of Justice and the Interior Department declare that construction bordering or under Lake Oahe won't go forward pending further review.

**Nov. 20, 21** — Authorities use tear gas, rubber bullets and water sprays on protesters who they say assaulted officers with rocks and burning logs at a blockaded bridge, in one of the most violent clashes of the protest.

**Dec. 4** — Assistant Army Secretary for Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy declines to allow the pipeline to be built under Lake Oahe in part because she says alternate routes need to be considered. Energy Transfer Partners calls the decision politically motivated and accuses President Barack Obama's administration of delaying the matter until he leaves office.

**Jan. 18, 2017** — The Army Corps launches a full environmental study of the pipeline's disputed Lake Oahe crossing, a study that could take up to two years. Boasberg, the federal judge, rejects an ETP request to stop the study.

**Jan. 24** — President Donald Trump signs executive actions to advance the construction of the Dakota Access oil pipeline, along with the Keystone XL oil pipeline.

**Jan. 31** — Sen. John Hoeven of North Dakota says the Acting Secretary of the Army has directed the Army Corps of Engineers to proceed with an easement necessary to complete the pipeline.

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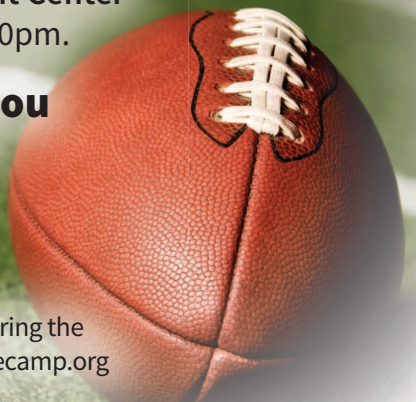


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