

Famously cold N. Dakota winter menaces pipeline protest camp

By **JAMES MACPHERSON**
Associated Press

CANNON BALL, N.D. (AP) — So far, the hundreds of protesters fighting the Dakota Access pipeline have shrugged off the heavy snow, icy winds and frigid temperatures that have swirled around their large encampment on the North Dakota grasslands.

But if they defy next week’s government deadline to abandon the camp, demonstrators know the real deep freeze lies ahead, when the full weight of the Great Plains winter descends on their community of nylon tents and teepees. Life-threatening wind chills and towering snow drifts could mean the greatest challenge is simple survival.

“I’m scared. I’m a California girl, you know?” said Loretta Reddog of Placer-ville, California, a protester who said she arrived several months ago with her two dogs and has yet to adjust to the harsher climate.

The government has ordered protesters to leave federal land by Monday, although it’s not clear what, if anything, authorities will do to enforce that mandate. Demonstrators insist they will stay for as long as it takes to divert the \$3.8 billion pipeline, which the Standing Rock Sioux tribe believes threatens sacred sites and a river that provides drinking water for millions of people.

The pipeline is largely complete except for a short segment that is planned to pass beneath a Missouri River reservoir. The company doing the building says it is unwilling to reroute the project.

For several months, the government permitted the gathering, allowing its population to swell. The Seven Council Fires camp began growing in August as it took in the overflow crowd from smaller protest sites nearby. It now covers a half square mile, with living quarters that include old school buses, fancy motorhomes



In this Tuesday photo, a person walks through a snow storm at the Oceti Sakowin camp where people have gathered to protest the Dakota Access oil pipeline in Cannon Ball, N.D.

and domelike yurts. Hale bales are piled around some teepees to keep out the wind. There’s even a crude corral for horses.

The number of inhabitants has ranged from several hundred to several thousand. It has been called the largest gathering of Native American tribes in a century.

Increasingly, more permanent wooden structures are being erected, even though the Army Corps of Engineers considers them illegal on government property. The Standing Rock Sioux insist the land still belongs to their tribe under a nearly 150-year-old treaty.

Nate Bison, a member of South Dakota’s Cheyenne River Sioux, came to the camp after quitting his job in Las Vegas a week ago. He said he intends to stay indefinitely, a prospect that may cause him to lose his house in Nevada.

“But since I’ve lived in these conditions before, to me it’s not all that bad,” he said.

Camp morale is high, he



Megan Toben releases tobacco at the edge of the Cannonball river during a Native American water ceremony at the Oceti Sakowin camp where people have gathered to protest the Dakota Access oil pipeline in Cannon Ball on Friday.

added, despite the onset of winter.

“Everybody I’ve talked to, you hear laughter and people just having a good time, enjoying the camaraderie and the support from each other,” Bison said. “And the love. People are taking the shirts off their own backs for other people. No one is left out that I’ve seen.”

On Thursday, the camp near the confluence of the

firewood, much of which has come from outside of North Dakota, the least-forested state in the nation. A collection of Army surplus tents with heating stoves serve as kitchen, dining hall, medical clinic and a camp-run school. Many of the smaller tents have become tattered by the wind.

Thane Maxwell, a 32-year-old Minneapolis native who has been living at the camp since July, said North Dakota’s bitter cold will not deter protesters committed to fighting the pipeline, or “black snake” as they call it.

Tribes from the Great Plains states are adept at surviving brutal winters, he said. Others from warmer climes are being taught how to endure the frostbite-inducing temperatures that are sure to come.

“A lot of these people have been living in this climate for hundreds of years,” said Maxwell a member of Minnesota-based Honor the Earth Foundation. “It’s a skill set that can be learned. The danger is escalating from law enforcement, not the weather.”

Reddog said she has confidence in the camp community. “Everybody’s really stepping up and taking care of each other,” she said.

Maxwell put out a call on social media for more donations, seeking four-wheel drive trucks and foul-weather clothing. He also asked for gas masks and protective baseball and hockey gear to shield protesters from any future skirmishes with police.

More than 525 people from across the country have been arrested since August. In a recent clash between police and protesters near the path of the pipeline, officers used tear gas, rubber bullets and large water hoses in sub-freezing temperatures. Organizers said at least 17 protesters were taken to the hospital, some for hypothermia and one for an arm injury. One officer was hurt.

North Dakota has often

conjured images of a wind-swept, treeless wasteland. The perception was so great that it led to a short-lived proposal to change the state’s name by dropping “North” and leaving just “Dakota,” to dispel the image of inhospitable winter weather.

Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier, who is heading the law enforcement effort around the pipeline, said he hopes the harsh conditions force people to leave the encampment, something the state and federal governments have so far been unable to do.

In addition to the federal order, North Dakota Gov. Jack Dalrymple issued a “mandatory evacuation” for the camp “to safeguard against harsh winter conditions.” But he said Wednesday that the state has no intention of blocking food and supplies from coming into the camp.

Doing so would be a “huge mistake from a humanitarian viewpoint,” the Republican said.

The federal deadline probably will not have any immediate effect on the camp either. Soon after it was set, the Army Corps of Engineers explained that the agency had no plans to forcibly remove anyone, although violators could be charged with trespassing.

Back at the camp, about 75 people lined up Thursday to draw propane for heating and cooking from a fuel truck. The driver, Rodney Grant, said it was his seventh trip in a week. The propane was free to campers. Grant said he did not know who was paying for it.

Dani Jo McKing, a member of the Standing Rock Sioux, was among those in line. She and her husband have been sharing cold-weather tips with people who are not from North Dakota. She said people with out-of-state license plates have been seen driving away from the camp. The cruel winter is bound to induce others to head home, she said.

The “Two Trumps” surface in transition

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump’s skeptics hope the presidency will reveal a serious side of the brash businessman. His supporters want him to keep the freewheeling style that rattled Washington.

In true Trump fashion, so far he’s doing both.

Trump has soothed some Republican establishment anxieties with many of his early Cabinet picks, including the respected retired Gen. James Mattis to lead the Pentagon and Georgia Rep. Tom Price, an orthopedic surgeon tapped to head the Department of Health and Human Services. He’s hinted that he’s open to shifting some of his most controversial policies, including his rejection of climate change and support for torture. He’s been full of praise for President Barack Obama and largely respectful of Hillary Clinton, his vanquished campaign rival.

But Trump is also refusing to abandon the raucous, stream-of-consciousness rallies and Twitter tirades that defined his presidential campaign. He’s continued to level false statements, claiming without evidence that millions of people voted illegally in the election. And he’s infused the normally staid Cabinet selection process with reality television drama, inviting cameras into his dinner with Mitt Romney, a leading candidate for secretary of state, and announcing the secretary of defense pick in an arena, seemingly off the cuff.

“He was a very unconventional candidate,” House Speaker Paul Ryan said. “He’s going to be an unconventional president.”

Despite his tell-it-like-it-is reputation, Trump is fueled by a deep need to be liked, according to long-time associates.

He often modulates his tone to his setting and frequently tries to curry favor with his audience by telling them what he thinks they want to hear. He often speaks in vague generalities, his

Trump speaks with Taiwan president, risking China tensions

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump spoke Friday with the president of Taiwan, a move that will be sure to anger China. It is highly unusual, probably unprecedented, for a U.S. president or president-elect to speak directly with a leader of Taiwan, a self-governing island the U.S. broke diplomatic ties with in 1979. Washington has pursued a so-called “one China” policy since 1979, when it shifted diplomatic recognition of China from the government in Taiwan to the communist government on the mainland. A statement from Trump’s transition team said he spoke with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, who offered her congratulations. Trump tweeted later: “The President of Taiwan CALLED ME today to wish me congratulations on winning the Presidency. Thank you!”

policy plans short on details, and that allows supporters to read in what they wish.

And sometimes he seems to move in contradictions, as when he made simultaneous appointments of Reince Priebus — a nod to the Washington establishment — and Stephen Bannon — a shot across the establishment’s bow — to fill two key roles in his administration, giving opposing factions of his coalition something to cheer.

People who meet with the president-elect personally talk about there being “two Trumps” — the self-promoting celebrity that’s seen in public and the amiable and courteous grandfather who emerges in private.

Indeed, Trump has appeared to win over some of his toughest Republican critics since defeating Clinton. GOP lawmakers have praised all of his Cabinet nominees, some of whom hold more traditionally conservative views than Trump himself. Romney, who was one of Trump’s fiercest critics during the campaign, emerged from their dinner this week with warm words for a man he’d only recently called a “phony.”

“He continues with a message of inclusion and bringing people together and his vision is something which obviously connected with the American people in a very

powerful way,” Romney said in a stunning turnabout for the 2012 GOP nominee.

But Trump appears acutely aware that the enthusiastic supporters who propelled him to the White House are watching carefully to see if he’ll back away from his pledges to shake up the political system. Supporters shouted their opposition to Romney being in the Cabinet Thursday as Trump stood on stage in Cincinnati for the kickoff of a “thank you” tour for voters.

Trump gave them plenty else to cheer about, fully re-embracing his firebrand and raucous campaign persona.

He took the stage full of swagger and as focused on score-settling as he was during the campaign. He spent more than 10 minutes bashing the press, recounting how the media doubted his chances of winning.

Trump did hit some of the right notes in terms of unifying the nation when he managed to stick to the script rolling down the teleprompter. He called for a “truly inclusive society, where we support each other, love each other, and look out for each other.”

But he also reminisced how “fun” it was “fighting Hillary.” He stunned even his own advisers by announcing his nomination of Mattis from the stage.

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