**STATEMENT BY THE KENTUCKY COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
ABOUT THE PROPOSED NATURAL GAS LIQUIDS PIPELINE THROUGH KENTUCKY**

December 3, 2013

Psalm 24 says “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.” As God’s people, we are to care for creation in every area of life. The Kentucky Council of Churches “calls upon local, state, and federal governments, in their function of providing for the general welfare to …protect the earth and all living things therein as vital resources for life both today and in the future. ”[[1]](#footnote-1)

We speak out, therefore, about the controversial race to transport natural gas liquids through Kentucky. We all, together and as individuals, have a moral duty to assess the impact of the proposed transport system on the health, safety and economic well-being of the people, flora and fauna of Kentucky, as well as present and future impacts on our land and water resources. To do this, we must take time to learn the facts, insist on a comprehensive environmental impact study, and guarantee authoritative oversight of any well-studied plan that may be approved.

Need for an impact study:

The proposed transport system for the natural gas liquids would lead to one or more underground pipelines, using a mix of new and re-purposed older pipes. Natural gas liquids are flammable and toxic and are put under pressure to move them great distances in a liquid state. A leak or seep could pollute groundwater that provides drinking water for individuals and communities, and the proposed route of new construction would cross more than 700 surface waterways. A significant release from a pipeline of this size and under this pressure could cause moderate to significant damage within a 1,000 – 5,000 foot radius, affecting the drinking water for Kentuckians as well as homes, property, communities, land and animals.

It is also important to give due scrutiny to the promised benefits of the pipelines in order to know whether the benefits justify incurring the risks and inconveniences posed by a hazardous liquids pipeline.

As of yet, there is no promise of a thorough impact study that would systematically pose and answer questions such as those we are raising. This study is necessary to help the public and our representatives make good decisions. A matter of this seriousness requires a process of well-informed and transparent deliberation. We owe each other this respect. We call for such an impact study to be undertaken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which has the authority to approve or reject the proposed stream crossings, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, whose approval of the “abandonment” of a section of a Texas Gas transmission pipeline is required in order to allow the line to be repurposed for natural gas liquids.

Need for guaranteed authoritative oversight:
 If a pipeline project is allowed to proceed, it will also be important to be sure that lines of accountability are clear, and that the entity given oversight has the authority needed to ensure that accountability. We call for our elected officials to clarify these lines of authority and accountability by creating a state siting board with the power to impose those conditions necessary to fully mitigate the potential risks and problems posed by this and other hazardous material pipelines.
Conclusion:
We ask Kentucky legislators and the governor to create a siting board with oversight authority, and ask the Corps of Engineers and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to require an environmental impact statement in order to protect the public and our sacred water and land.

1. “Caring for God’s Earth,” a policy statement of the Kentucky Council of Churches in 2006, can be found in its entirety at <http://www.kycouncilofchurches.org/council-statements/view-policy-statements/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)