

Lobos CO₂ Pipeline Health Impact Assessment: *Affects of pipeline development on land, resources, and community*

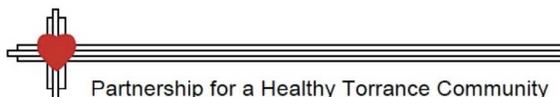


The Problem

In 2013 Kinder Morgan, the largest energy infrastructure company in North America, proposed to spend \$1 billion to build the Lobos CO₂ Pipeline – 213 miles of pipeline that would carry carbon dioxide (CO₂) from an underground reservoir in Arizona to eastern New Mexico and West Texas to support crude oil extraction. Many communities through which the pipeline would be built struggle with poverty, unemployment, and other socioeconomic and health challenges, and shared concerns about the project's impact on their communities.

What We Did

HIP, the New Mexico Department of Health, and Partnership for a Healthy Torrance Community completed an HIA to evaluate the impacts of the proposed pipeline on residents of Torrance County, New Mexico. Based on the concerns of community members, the HIA focused on assessing how the proposed pipeline would affect culture and connection to the land, land use, economic vitality, safety, and water quality and availability.



"To take away the connection to the land...to take a part of us...it is like missing a limb."

– HIA Focus Group Participant

What We Found

We found that building a carbon dioxide pipeline through Torrance County had the potential to compromise safety, threaten water supplies and quality, and disrupt the special places, culture and historical connection to the land that unite the county's diverse communities. In sum, the project offered few if any benefits to the health, well being and economy of the county.

Impact

The HIA was completed in May 2015. Before its completion, falling oil prices prompted Kinder Morgan to withdraw its application to the US Bureau of Land Management for the pipeline. Because the company reserves the right to revive the project at any time, the HIA's findings could be used to inform this project in the future and similar pipeline projects elsewhere. In the meantime, community members have used HIA findings and recommendations to develop local zoning and land use controls that could protect against the types of risks described in the report.

By engaging residents who would be impacted by the proposed pipeline, the HIA process brought together diverse groups of Torrance County residents who had not worked together previously, and empowered many to take part in decision-making processes for the first time.

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