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Environmentalists to Trump: "Game on"

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Four days into the new presidential administration and environmental groups began preparing for a fight as President Donald J. Trump began dismantling his predecessor's environmental legacy and prohibited federal environmental organizations from releasing information.

Advocates see his quick action to pave the way for two oil pipelines as indications a possible harbinger of further cuts to national preservation programs. Whatever signals Trump gave during the transition that he is open to some environmental causes seem to have been tossed aside.

On Tuesday, Trump revived both the Dakota Access and Keystone XL oil pipelines and signed an executive order to fast track infrastructure projects that are slowed down by what he termed "incredibly cumbersome, long, horrible" environmental reviews.

Those actions, though expected, frustrated environmentalists.

"We knew that environmental justice communities would be hit first and worst by rollbacks under the Trump administration," said Kay Cuajunco, a representative of the California Environmental Justice Alliance, which has offices in Los Angeles.

Last month, under the outgoing Obama Administration, the Army Corps of Engineers denied a permit needed for a crucial segment of the 1,172-mile Dakota Access Pipeline that would cross under the Missouri River just north of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation.

"Trump claims he's a good businessman, yet he's encouraging dirty, dangerous tar sands development when clean energy is growing faster, producing more jobs and has a real future," said Michael Brune, the executive director of the Sierra Club.

The Dakota Access Pipeline would connect Bakken oil fields with Illinois, while Keystone XL could link the Gulf Coast with controversial Canadian oil sands. Environmentalists point to climate research that says [oil sands emit a significant amount of greenhouse gases](#) when compared with other forms of oil production.

“It’s appalling that Trump wants to throw open our borders to big polluters,” said Rhea Suh, the president of the Natural Resources Defense Council. “Eliminating the national interest determination process, used by both Republican and Democratic administrations for decades, cedes control of our borders to multinational corporations to jam through cross-border infrastructure projects.”

Republicans have said the pipeline will create new jobs. Green groups point out that new technologies also create jobs, but not at the expense of the environment.

“We will not accept that good jobs and a healthy environment are mutually exclusive,” Cuajunco said.

In addition to reviving the pipelines, the new administration [instructed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) to freeze all contracts and grants, which fund research, and stop releasing updates through social media platforms. Similarly, the administration banned the U.S. Agriculture Department from releasing its research.

Perhaps the first indication Trump might clash with environmental agencies came on inauguration day, when the National Park Service was ordered to stop tweeting after sharing an image that compared the size of the crowd during Obama’s swearing in ceremony and Trump’s.

On Tuesday the Twitter war resumed between the new president and the National Park Service, when the account for South Dakota’s Badlands National Park went rogue and began tweeting climate change facts.