

October 7, 2016

Steve Sitting Bear
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
External Affairs Director
PO Box D, Bldg #1, N. Standing Rock Ave
Fort Yates ND, 58538

Dear Mr. Sitting Bear:


The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) supports protests by the **Standing Rock Sioux Tribe** in response to the Dakota Access Pipeline Project, [which intends to run the pipeline through tribal lands](#). Because the pipeline could endanger the Standing Rock Sioux's drinking water and the water accessed by many other people downstream, the tribe says the pipeline violates the social justice principles of environmental justice.

NASW agrees with and supports the Standing Rock Sioux on their struggle to protect their environment. Far too often the exposure to environmental hazards of people of color is ignored for the sake of economic expediency. Environmental hazards from oil spills in particular have been well documented.

The Tribal Council has legal jurisdiction to approve projects like the pipeline, yet their decision seems to have been ignored, which is unacceptable. The land in question was officially designated as a reservation in 1889. More important, the tribal government maintains jurisdiction on all reservation lands, including all rights-of-way, waterways, watercourses, and streams running through any part of the reservation. Therefore, it is understandable that when permission was given by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to move forward with the project, the Standing Rock Sioux vigorously protested.

It is heartening that the [Obama administration intervened](#) and stopped construction on federal land. We also think that the administration made a right decision in requiring the Corps of Engineers to reexamine its original conclusions that led it to approving the pipeline. It is our hope that they will closely confer with the Standing Rock Tribal Council in that reexamination.

However, the administration's decision is a temporary pause in the pipeline construction. NASW stands with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in asking for a permanent end of building the pipeline on their ancestral lands.

Sincerely,


Heidi McIntosh, MSW
Deputy Director, Programs