

## Sample Journal Entry (Part 2)

### Journal Entry #1: January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013

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Cooper, C. (2013, January 5). *Keystone pipeline inches forward*. Edmonton Journal.  
<http://www.calgaryherald.com/business/Keystone+pipeline+inches+forward/7779210/story.html>

**Summary:** Over a year ago, President Obama halted the Keystone pipeline project due to possible environmental impacts along the pipeline's proposed route. Based on Obama's decision the northern portion of the pipeline has been re-routed to avoid the ecologically sensitive Sand Hills region; however, it still passes through the Ogallala aquifer, which serves as a significant source of drinking water for surrounding communities. This past week a new report projecting environmental impacts along the updated Keystone pipeline route has been released. This report concluded that there would be minimal ecological impacts. Further, the report suggests that various types of crude could safely pass through the pipeline and that every year the project would add \$421 million to the state's combined economy and tax revenue. According to the report, the project should move forward.

While the TransCanada Corporation, who is responsible for the pipeline, has not yet reviewed the latest report, the US government has begun the process of evaluating its conclusions. Should it pass through Governor Heineman's office it will proceed to the US State Department, who will deliver recommendations to President Obama for a final ruling. Groups opposed to the pipeline continue to question why the route remains through the Ogallala aquifer.

**Commentary:** Demand for safe, clean drinking water will undoubtedly continue to grow, while our demand for oil is projected to decrease. While this project may meet short-term goals it overlooks long term considerations. The current pipeline route will have negative impacts on the environment, and while the report may deem these impacts as 'minimal', in my opinion, compromising the Ogallala aquifer is non-negotiable. This of course brings up a debate in semantics; if compromising the water quality of the Ogallala aquifer is deemed minimal, what other impacts are going unaccounted for?

This is a clear example of how our economic system does not take into account the ecosystem services provided by nature (Abramovitz, 1998). The report describes the projected monetary benefits that the pipeline may deliver and concludes, based on such monetary benefits that the project may be justified; however, by focusing on monetary aspects alone, basic human needs have been overlooked. Moral considerations, such as the value of safe and clean drinking water, is difficult to ascribe monetary value to, such that its 'value' is often misrepresented or entirely overlooked within the decision making process. The current regulatory apparatus would be improved by inclusion of ecosystem services in its cost-benefit analyses.

Natural resources must be developed but we have the opportunity do so in a way that incorporates ecosystem services. In my opinion, the proposed pipeline route needs to be over-hauled by a joint commission of environmentalists, government and industry leaders. Only then will the pipeline have a chance to provide short-term benefits to the economy while respecting environmental integrity and viability in the long-term.

### Additional References List

Abramovitz, J. (1998, Jan). Putting a value on nature's "free" services. *World Watch*, 11 10-19.