A new route for the Keystone XL pipeline intended to avoid sensitive portions of the Sandhills region was submitted today to the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). According from TransCanada's CEO, Russ Girling, the route was "based on extensive feedback from Nebraskans, and reflects our shared desire to minimize the disturbance of land and sensitive resources in the state."

The proposal from TransCanada identifies three route modifications for the new path of the Keystone XL project after objections were raised that the scope of the original project would impact the sensitive soil and water resources of Nebraska's Sandhills region. Nebraska's unicameral legislature over overwhelmingly approved legislation by a vote of 44-5 last April to allow the state to study a new route for the project and hold public meetings to gather input from concerned citizens. The plan offered by TransCanada, formally known as the Supplemental Environmental Report, was based on the received public comments and discussions the company held with impacted landowners. Three significant changes were made to the route under the new plan:

- Northern Alternative - The new route minimizes the potential impact to soils that are not technically considered part of the Sandhills, but have sandy, erodible soil.
- Clarks Alternative - The new route is now down gradient from the town of Clarks Well Head Protection Area which supplies the residents with drinking water.
- Western Alternative - The new route avoids the city of Western's Well Head Protection Area that was expanded in 2011.

The company also highlighted other aspects and changes to the preferred route below:

- The route covers approximately 210 miles of the Keystone XL route in Nebraska and increases the length of the pipeline in the state by 20 miles to a new total length of approximately 275 miles
- The Nebraska DEQ and other state and federal agencies developed a map that accurately defines the Sandhills region. The re-route respects this map and avoids the Sandhills area
- The route included in the SER crosses fewer miles of threatened and endangered species habitat, fewer streams and rivers and considerably fewer miles of severely wind erodible soils
- Two wellhead protection areas have been avoided

Nebraska DEQ is expected to make a decision on the Supplemental Environmental Report sometime this fall after a public hearing and comments are held on the proposal. If a decision is rendered in favor of the project, Governor Dave Heineman will have up to 30 days to make a final determination of disapproval or support.