

White House Council on Environmental Quality
FOIA Officer
722 Jackson Place, NW
Washington, DC 20503
Fax: 202/456-0753
efoia@ceq.eop.gov

August 26, 2021

Dear Freedom of Information Act Officer:

Please accept this request for records pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552 et seq., on behalf of Climate Investigations Center. This request focuses on documents describing the current planning of a nationwide high pressure carbon dioxide pipeline network spanning nearly every state and the Council on Environmental Quality's role in this process. CIC makes this request also in light of the CEQ's recent [report to Congress on Carbon Capture, Utilization and Sequestration](#).

Background

As described in [recent investigative reporting](#), a large CO2 pipeline operated by Denbury Resources ruptured in Mississippi in early 2020¹. The accident flooded a small town with a dense cloud of CO2 (with smaller amounts of hydrogen sulfide) which injured dozens of people. Some accident victims were found unconscious, trapped in their cars while trying to escape. Residents and first responders were unprepared for the danger during and after rescue operations.

CEQ's recent report to Congress includes a map from the Great Plains Institute Carbon Capture Coalition showing a vast network of planned CO2 hubs and pipelines, but only for the central United States. There are other versions of maps available from Great Plains Institute that include proposed pipeline networks and CCUS hubs for the East and West coasts (one version is included below for reference)². Princeton University's December 2020 *Net Zero America* report, was also cited in CEQ's CCUS report to Congress and includes extensive modelling of a (completely different looking) proposed nationwide CO2 pipeline routes.³ These maps, however, were not included in your report to Congress.

Glaringly absent from public documents about the processes for creating these pipeline maps is the potential impact on communities along the routes depicted and how environmental justice concerns will be addressed. Nor do currently available documents speak to the significant landscape challenges along proposed routes such as steep or wet terrain, or mountain, river and stream crossings.

¹ [Dan Zegart, "The Gassing of Satartia", Huffington Post, August 26, 2021.](#)

² [Carbon Capture Coalition \(Great Plains Institute\), Federal Policy Blueprint, 16 \(Feb. 2021\).](#)

³ [Princeton University, Net Zero America, 243 \(Dec. 2020\).](#)

Your report to Congress does mention safety with regards to CCS projects and “engaging with communities with potential environmental justice concerns” However, the pipeline section of the report cites only research from studies that have been designed to optimize the cost of these pipelines and fails to identify the lack of studies on potential risk to communities and populations along the more than 60,000 miles of proposed new CO2 pipelines the Princeton study calculated is needed for a national CCS system. There is no stipulation in your report of risk assessment studies that would be required for CO2 pipeline routes even though such assessments have been done on previous CCUS pilot projects (see 2011 American Electric Power Mountaineer Project) Your report appendix B details a “Public Engagement Inventory” where one assumes the public would bear the burden of proof by providing input on health and safety risks of CO2 pipelines.

Request for Records:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, we request copies of:

- all communications, drafts and documents pertaining to environmental justice, health risk assessment and the safety of carbon dioxide (CO2) pipelines during the development of the Council on Environmental Quality Report to Congress on Carbon Capture, Utilization and Sequestration (June 2021)
- any and all communications about the use of pipeline maps in the aforementioned report to Congress.
- all communications between CEQ and other federal agencies or outside parties pertaining to the safety of CO2 transport and CO2 pipelines or environmental justice concerns around CCS projects from January to June 2021.

We also request copies of any documents or communications created or received by the agency between January 2021 and August 2021 regarding the production of the report to Congress or any discussion of CCUS and the following topic areas:

- CO2 pipeline routes
- Health and safety risks to communities
- Environmental justice
- Pipeline construction specifications
- Risk assessments pertaining to leaks from or accidents involving CO2 pipelines
- Experiments or modelling of CO2 pipeline accidents or leaks
- Potential safety risks of contamination of the CCUS CO2 waste stream, including hydrogen sulfide, water or other contaminants.
- Emergency response preparedness for CO2 pipeline accidents and attacks (for example, training and safety of first responders and healthcare workers and warning systems).

Fee Waiver Request:

CIC requests a waiver of fees incurred by CEQ in responding to CIC's request because "disclosure of the information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester." 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii). Specifically, CIC requests these records so that communities may have adequate information in order to protect themselves from the hazards posed by CO2 pipelines and to be able to meaningfully engage in any potential public comment process as described in CEQ's CCUS report to Congress.

The request concerns the operations or activities of the government. In particular, the request relates to CEQ policy regarding a potentially new nationwide pipeline system and how CEQ considered certain health, safety, and environmental justice issues prior to providing recommendations to Congress.

Disclosure is likely to contribute to an understanding of government operations or activities. Disclosure of information created or maintained by CEQ regarding CO2 pipeline safety and environmental justice issues will help the public understand the formulation of agency policy. This will contribute to the understanding of the federal government's support of CCUS.

Disclosure of requested information will likely result in public understanding. CIC seeks this information solely to inform the public and will analyze and share any documents with a wide audience. Results of CIC's research are disseminated through its website, social media platforms, and special CIC project websites which have approximately 5,000 monthly visitors. CIC's investigative work has reached audiences through news sources such as The Washington Post,⁴ Grist,⁵ Mother Jones,⁶ and The New York Times.⁷

Disclosure of requested information will contribute significantly to public understanding. As discussed above, information regarding safety and environmental justice considerations and federal CCUS policy is scant. The public has a need for information regarding the topic of this request so that it can participate and contribute to the government's policies and planning in regards to a massive pipeline system that may traverse multiple states across the nation.

⁴ Amy Westervelt, "How the fossil fuel industry got the media to think climate change was debatable," Washington Post (Jan. 10, 2019) https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/01/10/how-fossil-fuel-industry-got-media-think-climate-change-was-debatable/?utm_term=.38dae4f07b73.

⁵ Chris D'Angelo, "Dakota Access company bought up dozens of anti-pipeline URLs" Grist (Apr. 28, 2019) <https://grist.org/article/dakota-access-company-bought-up-dozens-of-anti-pipeline-urls/>.

⁶ Rebecca Leber, Mother Jones, "How the Fossil Fuel Industry Convinced Americans to Love Gas Stoves," (June 17, 2021) <https://www.motherjones.com/environment/2021/06/how-the-fossil-fuel-industry-convinced-americans-to-love-gas-stoves/>.

⁷ Justin Gillis, "Deeper Ties to Corporate Cash for Doubtful Climate Researcher" <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/22/us/ties-to-corporate-cash-for-climate-change-researcher-Wei-Hock-Soon.html>

The requester has no commercial interest in the disclosure and therefore public interest in disclosure is greater than the commercial interest in the request. CIC seeks records for the purpose of providing analysis and disclosure to a broad public audience, and does not have a commercial interest in the material requested

Should you decline my fee waiver request, please notify me if costs exceed \$100. If practicable, provide copies of records in their native format and please deliver them using the email address listed below. Please reach out to me with any questions or issues regarding this request.

Thank you for your assistance.



Kert Davies
Director
Climate Investigations Center
info@climateinvestigations.org
PO Box 91
Alexandria, VA 22313

&

Daniel Zegart
Senior Investigator
Climate Investigations Center
info@climateinvestigations.org

(Reference Maps on following page)

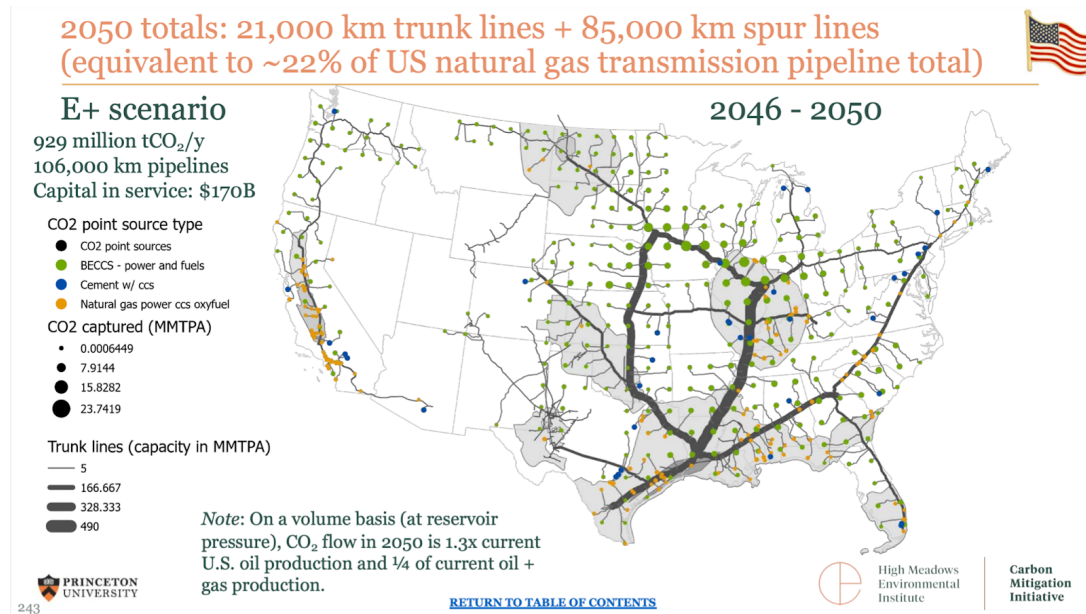
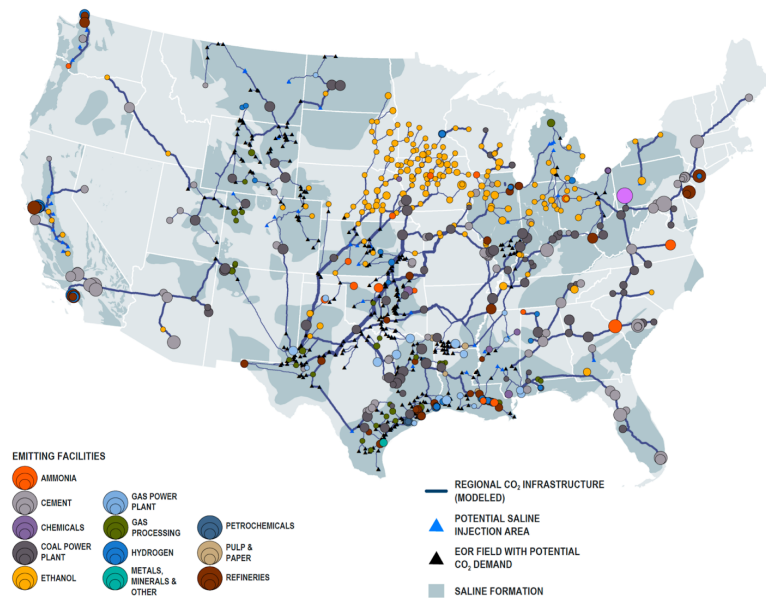


Figure 7: Optimized CO₂ Transport and Storage Network



Optimized CO₂ transport and storage network deployment modeling from the Great Plains Institute finds that, under 45Q, a shared, interconnected CO₂ transport and storage system could capture, transport and store 300 million metric tons of CO₂ per year by 2035 from industrial facilities and power plants.