

# [***“We All Need It To Survive”: Fighting the Bayou Bridge Pipeline***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5RG9-YJK1-F0YC-N0R7-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

Lake Worth: Earth First has issued the following press release:

    This is the first time in Louisiana that we have seen environmental justice, African-American communities, we have seen indigenous communities, we have seen crawfishers, we have seen faith leaders – stand together, united to say: “This is just a company we don’t want to give access to our waters and our future.”

    – Cherri Foytlin

In this episode, we speak to two members of the L’eau Est La Vie (“Water is Life”) Camp, which is fighting Energy Transfer Partners’ (ETP) southern end of the Dakota Access Pipeline in Louisiana, known as the Bayou Bridge pipeline. The construction threatens homes, drinking water, ecosystems, and food sources for plants, animals, and upwards of 1 million human beings in the Atchafalaya Basin located in Southern Louisiana. In response, the L’eau Est La Vie camp in the spirit of Standing Rock, is building a broad and grassroots movement to stop the pipeline from being constructed. Only instead of the grassy hills of North Dakota, Water Protectors are holding down movable floating blockades along riverways and in swamps.

In the face of growing opposition, Energy Transfer Partners continues to push the project forward, despite its long history of environmental, railroad, workplace, and health violations, and the fact that completed sections of the Dakota Access Pipeline have already started to leak in several locations. Publically, Energy Transfer Partners has stated that they expect to begin construction on the Bayou Bridge pipeline during the first quarter of 2018, and many suspect that they will simply begin building the pipeline regardless of if they have the permits or not, opting instead to pay the fines.

Since its start, the pipeline project has faced stiff opposition and currently faces a lawsuit in federal court, as Think Progress reported:

    The anger over yet another pipeline bubbled over in a recent meeting in St. James Parish, a petrochemical hub where the pipeline will terminate. St. James residents packed the permit hearing in August to express their concerns about Energy Transfer Partners’ track record and the risk of further contamination of the community. St. James, a mostly black, working class region, is colloquially known as “Cancer Alley” for its high rates of illness and pollution.

    The council ultimately approved the land use permit; the four white members overruled the three black members opposed to the project.

It’s this track record of spills, destruction, and threats to working-class communities and ecosystems that has pushed so many to mobilize against it, as the project is slated to criss cross through hundreds of streams, rivers, marshes, buoys, and wetlands. According to Earth Justice:

    The pipeline project proposes to connect the controversial Dakota Access pipeline, which transports volatile and explosive Bakken crude oil from North Dakota, to refineries in St. James Parish and export terminals, forming the southern leg of the Bakken Pipeline.  Energy Transfer Partners owns both the Dakota Access Pipeline and the proposed Bayou Bridge Pipeline.

This reality can be seen directly on the impact that current pipelines in Louisiana have on the local crawfish population, an animal sacred to the indigenous people of the United Houma Nation (of which one of our guests is a part), a staple of the local diet and economy, and who’s image can be seen on the L’eau Est La Ve Camp’s logo. As one local fisherman who we reference in this interview, Jody Meche, stated in an article in Earth Justice:

    “They created these pipeline right-of-ways, and instead of flattening out the dirt they excavated, they left it. They interrupted the water flow. And every year, the ecosystem has been on the decline. The crawfish is to the point where they won’t live in our crawfish traps unless we let the traps stick out above the top of the water so they can come up for air. The water quality is so poor they can’t get enough oxygen out of the water.

    “When I first started fishing, you hardly had any problems with crawfish dying. You could set your traps on the bottom, five or six feet in the water, and the crawfish would all be alive. Now you go back, and all the crawfish are dead underwater.”

    Today we build: indigenous peoples, environmental justice communities, & many allies, in prayer & resistance. #NoBayouBridge #WaterIsLife pic.twitter.com/CPYXK35nOA

    — Leau Est La Vie Camp (@NoBayouBridge) June 24, 2017

But as non-profits fight the pipeline in the courts, on the ground and in the water, Water Protectors are building up grassroots opposition. The L’eau Est La Vie Camp write of themselves:

    L’eau Est La Vie camp is a floating pipeline resistance camp. Although we have no leaders, we value the voices of our indigenous, black, femme, and two spirit organizers. We fight in the bayous of Louisiana, Chata Houma Chittimacha Atakapaw territory, to stop the Bayou Bridge Pipeline, an Energy Transfer Partners project and the tail end of the Dakota Access Pipeline.

    BBP resistance is a continuation of our fight in Standing Rock, and furthermore a continuation of the centuries old fight to protect sacred stolen territory. But unlike the NoDAPL sacred fight, this camp must be smaller and more vetted, because of the fragile ecosystem, the surveillance, and the sacred wishes of the people of this land.

Speaking on behalf of L’eau Est La Vie camp is our two guests, both of whom were present and involved in the struggle at Standing Rock, and who discuss first the pipeline itself and its potential impact, and then how the camp was formed and grew to include a wide coalition of supporters. We then go on to talk about the state of the broader movement against pipelines and resource extraction, as well what our two guests carried with them out of the struggle at Standing Rock. Moreover, we talk about the connections and relationships being forged through the community struggle to stop the Bayou Bridge pipeline, and how these relationships in turn inform their organizing.

As one guest states, people that live in the pipeline’s path come from a variety of walks of life, yet all depend on the Atchafalaya Basin both as a means of sustaining their livelihoods and as a food and water source. They go on to discuss the relationship between the natural ***environment*** and those living in the area potentially impacted by the pipeline: “We all need it to survive. So many people in Louisiana live off the water. We live off the land. It’s how we get by, it’s not like what’s easy, it is what it is. It’s how we were raised.”

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