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(Neb)-Oct Hearing Set For Challenge To Keystone XL Permit

By: John Axtell Posted at: 08/08/2019 11:22 PM

BILLINGS, Mt. (AP) - A federal judge in Montana won't take up the latest dispute between the Trump administration and environmental groups over the proposed Keystone XL oil pipeline until this fall.

U.S. District Judge Brian Morris has scheduled a hearing for Oct. 9 on the groups' request to block President Trump's new permit allowing the pipeline to be built across the U.S.-Canada border.

Trump issued a permit for the pipeline from the Canadian oil sands to southeast Nebraska shortly after taking office in 2017, but Judge Morris blocked the permit last fall, ruling that officials had failed to meet environmental review rules by not fully considering oil spills and other impacts.

The president responded by rescinding the 2017 permit and issuing a new one in March. Judge Morris lifted his ban on construction, saying it became moot when the permit it was based on died.

The environmental groups who challenged the original permit quickly filed nearly identical challenges to the new one while accusing President Trump

Justice Department attorneys also will present their argument at the hearing to dismiss the lawsuit challenging Trump's issuing of the permit in March.

Trump signed the new permit after Morris blocked construction of the 1,184-mile (1,900-kilometer) pipeline from Canada to Nebraska in a ruling that said officials had not fully considered. The plaintiffs accuse Trump of signing the new permit simply to get around Morris' previous order.