



SWCA Environmental Consultants employees, left, conduct an archaeological dig as Julia Trigg Crawford, right, takes photographs while talking with TransCanada field coordinator Rudy Pavlina earlier this month in Sumner, Texas. TONY GUTIERREZ/AP

Pipeline irritates Texas landowners

By Ramit Plushnick-Masti

Associated Press

SUMNER, Texas — Oil has long lived in harmony with farmland and cattle across the Texas landscape, a symbiosis built on an unspoken honor code that allowed agriculture to thrive while oil was extracted.

Enter TransCanada.

As the company pursues construction of a controversial 1,179-mile-long cross-country pipeline meant to bring Canadian tar sands oil to South Texas refineries, it's finding opposition in the unlikelyst of places: Texas, a state that has more pipelines snaking through the ground than any other.

In the minds of some landowners approached by TransCanada for land, the company has broken an unspoken code.

Nearly half the steel TransCanada is using is not American-made, and the company won't promise to use local workers exclusively; it can't guarantee the oil will remain in the United States. It has snatched land. Possi-

bly most egregious: They've behaved like arrogant foreigners.

To fight back, Texas landowners are filing lawsuits, threatening to delay a project that already has encountered many obstacles. Others are allowing activists to go on their land to stage protests. Several have been arrested.

"We've fought wars for it. We stood our ground at the Alamo for it. There's a lot of reasons that Texans are very proud of their land," said Julia Trigg Crawford, who is fighting the condemnation of a parcel of her family's 650-acre farm about 115 miles northeast of Dallas.

Oil and agriculture have lived in peace in part because a one-time payment from a pipeline company or monthly royalties from a production rig can help finance a ranch or farm. The oil giants also respected landowners' Texas independence, even sometimes drilling in a different yard or rerouting a pipeline to ensure easy access to the minerals below.

TransCanada is differ-

ent. For one, it has sought and received court permission to condemn land when property owners didn't agree to an easement.

But TransCanada's pipeline, some landowners say, is worrisome because of the tar sands oil the company wants to transport. They point to an 800,000-gallon spill of mostly tar sands oil in Michigan's Kalamazoo River in 2010. It took Enbridge, the company that owns that pipeline, 17 hours to detect the rupture, and the cleanup is still incomplete.

Some say the risk of a spill now is too high to cooperate. Others want guarantees TransCanada will take full responsibility for a spill. Many just want respect.

Most pipeline projects in Texas have been completed with an average of 4 percent to 10 percent of condemned land. TransCanada, however, has condemned more than 100 of the 800 or so tracts — or about 12.5 percent — it needed to complete a 485-mile portion of the pipeline that runs through Texas.