

Why Susan Scott Buried TransCanada's Money on Her Family Farm

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By [Candice Bernd](#), *Truthout* | Report

The way this Texas farmer sees it, you can't plant money and grow food. So far the jar of "tainted" TransCanada bills she buried in the rich earth of her 60-acre farm has yielded only heavy machinery and a troop of activists from the Tar Sands Blockade.

Susan Scott worked for years and saved every penny she earned to buy her dream farm in Winnsboro, Texas. Well, it was her dream farm, but that was before the Keystone XL pipeline was slated for construction right over top of it.

She first came to the property when she was 27 years old, and fell in love with the place. When she dies, she says she wants to be buried on her property next to her horse.

Scott has been fighting to protect her farm, her cabin and her trees since before she ever heard of TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline. Having already beaten back a previous oil pipeline and a power line, she was stunned when she got wind of TransCanada's plans for her property.

"I'm going like, 'What now?'" Scott told Truthout.

Scott says she was intimidated into signing a contractual agreement with TransCanada for her land. "I said, 'I ain't signing that,' and [a TransCanada representative] said to me, 'Let me tell you why you ought to, because they are going file charges, take you to court and they're going to sue you. You're going to have to pay lawyer fees, you're going to have to pay court costs,' and God only knows what else they're going to come up with, and I'm going like, 'I am a farmer. I don't have that kind of money. I'm a farmer for heaven's sakes!'"

"And then I resigned myself and signed it, and then I buried [TransCanada's compensation money] somewhere up here on this 60 acres out in a jar somewhere, and it may be deteriorated, and it may not be deteriorated - who knows? It's tainted money, ain't never no good."

She could barely watch as Alejandro De la Torre was being extracted by the local police from a "sleeping dragon" lockdown, in which he had locked himself to a concrete-filled capsule buried on her property.

De la Torre locked down as part of the ongoing Tar Sands Blockade. He was extracted at around 4 p.m. on Monday, October 1, as workers moved in quickly to bulldoze the rest of what he was trying to save.

"People in Port Arthur and my home in Houston are the ones who will be bearing the brunt of the toxic emissions from the tar sands refineries and they're not going to see any of the economic benefits," De la Torre [said in an interview](#) before his arrest. "This is just another example of how people of color and low-income folks are placed in 'sacrifice zones' for our current economic system."

Police covered De la Torre with a tarp to hide his extraction [from local news cameras](#) and from observers nearby. Police also [confiscated the cameras](#) of blockaders at the scene who were trying to protect De la Torre for as long as possible.



(Photo: [Will Wysong / Flickr](#))

De la Torre could be facing possible felony charges due to Texas' [criminal instruments law](#). According to the law, a "criminal instrument" means anything - the possession, manufacture or sale of which is not otherwise an offense - that is specially designed, made, or adapted for use in the commission of an offense."

This [same law was used against](#) Occupy activists in Austin last December after police infiltrators gave protesters locking devices that they used to block an entrance to the port of Houston.

Scott's property has been deemed by TransCanada to be a "low consequence area," meaning that the company intends to use thinner pipeline steel across her land. Because tar sands does not readily flow through pipe, it has to be diluted with undisclosed chemicals and exposed to high temperatures and pressures to flow through what will be the nearly 1700-mile Keystone XL pipeline.

"I feel very strongly about this property. It's my entire 37 years of my life, all of my life. I intended to sit right in that cabin up there, sit on the porch with my old fan out there, and die," Scott says. "I don't want to live here if that line comes through. I don't want my children here, because I know the damn thing is going to break. There's no doubt in my mind. I saw it in a dream already."

Scott's story is just one of the reasons why blockaders continue to [occupy a tree village](#) in Winnsboro, Texas along the path of the Keystone XL pipeline.

As the blockade enters its eleventh day, workers continue to operate tree-clearing machines dangerously close to the activists protecting the land of farmers and families in East Texas.

Workers with Michel's, a corporation contracted out by TransCanada to build the southern leg of the Keystone XL pipeline across Texas and Oklahoma, are cutting perilously close to the support lines of activists sitting on top of a 40-foot-tall wall made of timber scaffolding designed to delay, and possibly block construction on the pipeline before it reaches more blockaders in tree platforms just behind the scaffolding.

Support lines are designed to catch the blockaders if they should fall - or get knocked off - their platforms. Blockaders staged on the timber wall are 40-feet in the air while blockaders in the tree village are more than 80-feet in the air.

According to activists [occupying the timber wall](#), a blockader tied rope onto pieces of wood that he then threw into the crotches of nearby trees slated for clear-cutting.

By connecting the surrounding trees to the timber wall they were occupying, the blockader hoped to create an obstacle that would prevent workers from cutting the trees, as that could bring down the scaffolding wall with the trees as they fell.

A worker operating a feller buncher wielded a felled tree like a baseball bat, swinging the tree - gripped in the claw-like arm of the machine - at the ropes, trying to sever them. The machine ripped the rope directly from the hands of the blockader holding onto it.

Workers continued to operate machines only feet away from tree-sitters in violation of federal safety regulations.

"When the rope snapped, the whole wall shook," blockader Maggie Gorry told Truthout. "I was thinking, 'Oh my God, we're going to die.' That wall was built by people, not engineers ... They don't know how much weight it can take; they have no idea what went into this wall, how it's built, how much force it can withstand."

"Luckily, the rope just snapped and we bounced back, but it was really scary."

TransCanada operators have since begun working around the tree village to the west. According to the activists, however, the workers began clear-cutting outside the designated parameters claimed by TransCanada through contractual agreements with landowners.

Blockaders erected a single structure [called a "monopod"](#) in the nearly-cleared path in response to TransCanada's move to go around their blockade. Gorry occupied the top of that structure, successfully halting construction for nearly two days in a row. She was arrested early Thursday, October 4.

"I think it is an awesome thing that all of the young people are now seeing that this earth needs saving from

the idiots that think you can breathe money, and [you can] plant seeds and money is going to grow food," Scott says. "This is fresh air, this is good dirt."

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