



NC IPL is a program of the North Carolina Council of Churches. The Council is comprised of 27 distinct judicatories from 18 denominations. Across the state, our members have over 6,200 congregations with about 1.5 million congregants. NC IPL, as an interfaith program, also represents Jewish, Muslims, Unitarian Universalists, Friends, Buddhist, Sikh and Hindu individuals and congregations.

Tar sands, also called oil sands, consist of bitumen — flammable mixtures of hydrocarbons and other substances that are components of asphalt and tar — embedded in sand or clay. In the raw state, tar sands are fairly useless, and require substantial processing to produce the finished product known as syncrude. Tar sands are mined and processed to extract the oil-rich bitumen, which is then refined into oil. The mining of tar sands is a resource intensive process that emits three times the carbon of conventional oil.

The production of tar sands to liquid fuel requires natural gas to create steam that literally melts the tar off the sand. The recovered crude then needs to be refined. In the end, for every barrel of syncrude produced, around four barrels of water and 1,200 cubic feet of natural gas are required. The dirty wastewater is often pumped into enormous holding reservoirs, which pollute the environment with toxic substances that are dangerous to human health and wildlife populations. Communities located in proximity to current tar sands operations have experienced elevated cancer rates.

The majority of confirmed tar sands deposits are in the boreal forests of Alberta, Canada. The First Nations peoples of Canada are greatly affected by the mining of tar sands and transportation of syncrude on their lands, and are standing in opposition to the further development of tar sands because of the harm that occurs to their native lands, the animals that share the land, and their traditional hunting and fishing economy. Furthermore, Canada's boreal forests represent 25 percent of the intact, original forests on the planet. The boreal forest is a global resource for filtering the Earth's water, removing carbon from the atmosphere, and regulating the climate.

The focus on obtaining liquid fuel from tar sands is a serious and costly diversion from America's responsibility to lead the way toward a clean energy future. We cannot afford to become dependent on yet another dirty source of fuel. IPL encourages the expedited deployment of clean technologies such as wind, solar, and geothermal energy as alternatives to fossil fuels that are causing irreparable damage to the planet entrusted to us. As tar sands are being exploited to quench our addiction to liquid fuel for transportation, IPL advocates for transportation solutions such as better fuel efficiency, alternative fuels, mass transit and electric cars.