

What a giant cake and an East Texas pipeline have in common



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John Beard Jr., CEO of Port Arthur Community Action Network, center, and environmental campaign leaders deliver anniversary card and cake to wish Energy Transfer a sarcastic “Happy Anniversary” to the Texas freeze and blackouts outside the company’s office Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022, in downtown Houston. The groups also protested against Energy Transfer’s efforts to build the Blue Marlin crude oil terminal and pipeline, which would go through Sabine Lake, next to Port Arthur.

Yi-Chin Lee, Photographer / Staff photographer

An environmental group protesting a new oil pipeline in East Texas sought to turn heads in downtown Houston on Tuesday.

The group, Save Sabine Lake, threw a tongue-in-cheek freeze anniversary party targeting the offices of Energy Transfer, the Dallas pipeline company co-founded by Kelcy Warren.

Protesters carried a large decorative cake but failed in an attempt to present workers with a card congratulating the company on its profits during last year’s freeze. Energy Transfer is scheduled to report its 2021 fourth-quarter and full-year earnings Wednesday. Through the first nine months, the company reported earnings of \$4.6 billion, including a whopping \$3.3 billion in the first quarter of 2021, which included the deadly winter storm that proved to be a boon for many pipeline firms.

Protest organizers also focused on the company’s plans for the Blue Marlin offshore oil export platform that would include a 37-mile pipeline from Nederland through Sabine Lake and to the Gulf Coast. They argue that the project could threaten the fisheries and bird habitats in the region.

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Energy Transfer officials did not respond to a request for comment.

John Beard, a Port Arthur resident and CEO of the Port Arthur Community Action Network, said the pipeline is inching quietly toward reality.

It doesn’t take much leaked oil to contaminate a body of water, said Beard, adding that Sabine Lake tourism is too important to the local economy to risk spoiling.

“All of that would be affected, and it would be affected for generations,” he said. “That’s not a chance that we’re willing to take.”

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