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Contact: Kelly Darby  
512.771.8276  
[kelly@iando.com](mailto:kelly@iando.com)

## **Hill Country Commission Awards More Landowners Major Damages in Pipeline Case**

BLANCO COUNTY, TX -- A court-appointed panel has awarded a total of more than \$3 million to four landowners caught up in condemnation proceedings with Kinder Morgan over the proposed Permian Highway Pipeline. The awards, the largest of which was \$1.3 million, paint a stark contrast to Kinder Morgan's own appraisals of these same properties, none of which exceeded \$21,000. Kinder Morgan, who did not produce their appraiser at two hearings last week to defend their figure, has previously indicated their opposition to compensating property owners for devaluation, or damages, to the entire property as a result of the pipeline.

The controversial 42-inch, 430-mile pipeline is slated to transport natural gas from West Texas to Houston via the Texas Hill Country. It has faced fierce opposition to landowners along the prospective route. The hearings last week were among the first in the Hill Country and set the stage for landowners who wish to challenge what are widely seen as lowball offers by Kinder Morgan.

When a landowner and pipeline company cannot find agreement during price negotiations, the condemner - in this case Kinder Morgan - will file a petition with the court. Following statutory procedure, the court will appoint a three-member panel of real estate professionals from the county to consider the case and deliver the special commission's award.

Last week, another Blanco County property owner and member of the Texas Real Estate Advocacy and Defense (TREAD) Coalition, Matthew Walsh, was awarded \$233,500 in damages. After this initial hearing, details began to emerge about three other properties – Campbell Ranch, Neill Ranch, and Gloore Ranch – where the discrepancy between Kinder Morgan's appraisal and the value determined by the commission was even greater, with the most extreme case being a difference of 81 times Kinder Morgan's appraisal.

"The commissioners were laser-focused on the facts and circumstances of each case," said Chris Oddo, condemnation attorney for three of the landowners affected by last week's condemnation hearing. "In this case, the commissioners were considering the impact of a large, high-pressured natural gas pipeline cutting through the pristine Texas Hill Country. The substantial consequences of that pipeline are reflected in the award."

“Kinder Morgan only wants to compensate landowners for the part of the land impacted by the easement and refuses to accept responsibility for the 20-40 percent devaluation caused by the pipeline,” said Patrick Reznik, attorney for Mr. Walsh. “Their appraisal formula is inherently flawed.”

In a statement last week, Kinder Morgan hinted that half of the land needed for the pipeline route will have to be taken through lengthy condemnation hearings. Elyse Yates, spokesperson for TREAD, says that this indicates a flaw with the company’s choice of routes. She also points to Kinder Morgan’s actions during the condemnation process as an example of classic intimidation tactics and bad faith negotiations and says that they only serve to highlight the need for eminent domain reform and a strong public oversight process for intrastate pipeline routing.

“What Kinder Morgan essentially said is that half of the landowners involved are opting to fight at their own expense for fair compensation for damages to their land. This highlights a lack of integrity on Kinder Morgan’s part,” said Yates. “Landowners have been trying for months to help Kinder Morgan understand the unique challenges confronting the Permian Highway Pipeline in the Hill Country and defending their rights as private property owners. They won’t be intimidated by this company’s tactics,” continued Yates. “TREAD will be there every step of the way to offer support.”

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