



REPORT

FOSSIL ENERGY AND CARBON MANAGEMENT TRIBAL WORKING GROUP MEETING WITH U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY LEADERSHIP

**May 7, 2025
Washington, DC**

BACKGROUND – FOSSIL ENERGY & CARBON MANAGEMENT TRIBAL WORKING GROUP

The Federal Government has a treaty and trust responsibility to protect Tribal sovereignty and to revitalize Tribal communities, including through economic and energy development. Ensuring Tribal access to funding and incentive opportunities requires sufficient outreach and coordination. As such, the Fossil Energy and Carbon Management (FECM) Tribal Working Group was established in Fall 2024 to provide a portion of this outreach and coordination.

The purpose of the Tribal Working Group is two-fold:

1. To empower the Tribes with fossil energy and carbon management resources to gain access to the available funding and incentive opportunities.
2. To accelerate the Tribes' development of their vast energy resources and carbon management potential.

To achieve these goals, the Working Group will provide input, local knowledge, and expertise to the Federal Government on ways to assist Tribes' energy development efforts, as well as the utilization of their natural resources.

THE FOSSIL ENERGY AND CARBON MANAGEMENT TRIBAL WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

FECM meetings, organized by the United States Energy Association (USEA) with funding provided by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), are a regular venue for DOE's Office of Fossil Energy & Carbon Management's dialogue with tribes on energy opportunities, options, and collaboration.

The current meeting was held on May 7, 2025, in USEA's offices in Washington, D.C., and was the 7th event in the series. The previous meetings took place in Moab, Utah in November 2019; Las Vegas, Nevada, in September 2022; in Moab, Utah, in March 2023; in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in October 2023; in April–May 2024, in Jackson Hole, Wyoming; and in October 2024, in Medora, North Dakota.

The day-long session featured opening remarks by DOE and tribal representatives, followed by in-depth presentations from tribes highlighting unique energy challenges and goals. Key discussions centered on regulatory barriers to energy development, interagency coordination to streamline tribal energy initiatives, human and institutional capacity constraints, and financing challenges. Two roundtable sessions focused on reducing red tape and charting a forward-looking path for tribal energy development including the need to improve human and institutional capacity, culminating in DOE leadership reaffirming commitments to strengthen tribal partnerships and advance energy sovereignty.

Key issues discussed during the roundtable discussion on reducing red tape included the following:

1. **Mistrust in BIA and Federal Oversight:** Described as inefficient and opaque, with frequent delays in resource-related approvals and perceived favoritism toward non-tribal entities in leasing processes.
2. **Sovereignty and Jurisdictional Complexities:** Tribes are increasingly expected to assume responsibilities without full access to relevant records or decision-making authority. Complex land status arrangements further complicate enforcement and jurisdiction.
3. **Overriding Royalty Interests and Orphan Wells:** Concerns about overriding royalty interests, which can undermine the economic viability of wells and contribute to the growth of orphan

wells.

4. **Funding Distribution and Grant Administration:** History of poor tribal engagement and inefficient implementation of several federal programs, including those under DOE's Loan Programs Office and Methane Emissions Reduction Consortium (MERC).
5. **Federal Accountability and Tribal-Led Solutions:** Call for a shift toward self-determination – not to relieve the federal government of its trust responsibilities, but to enable tribes to better manage their own resources.
6. **State Relations and Infrastructure Development:** Some tribes, especially those in multi-state jurisdictions like the Navajo Nation – face ongoing legal and policy challenges.

The session on charting a forward-looking path for tribal energy development concluded with the following items to be addressed:

1. **Capital Access & Financing:** A call for tribal-specific financial tools to support energy development.
2. **NEPA Reform:** Streamlining environmental review processes to reduce redundancy and accelerate project timelines on tribal lands.
3. **Capacity Building:** Tribes need increased technical expertise, institutional infrastructure, and support to establish tribal energy offices and manage complex projects.
4. **Interagency Coordination:** A “one-stop shop” approach to reduce fragmentation and improve federal service delivery for tribal energy initiatives.
5. **Strategic Federal Engagement:** Sustained engagement with Congress to elevate tribal energy priorities through repeated interactions, not just one-off meetings.
6. **White Paper Development:** Need for comprehensive white paper to document specific regulatory barriers, case studies, and actionable federal policy recommendations.
7. **Project Finance Education:** A "Project Finance Boot Camp" to equip tribal members with skills in finance, permitting, and energy project planning.
8. **Direct Political Engagement:** The administration is motivated and fast-moving, creating a rare opportunity for tribal communities to advance their priorities.

Seven of the eight TWG members participated representing the following tribes: Caddo Nation; Crow Nation; Fort Peck Tribes; Mandan, Hidatsa, & Arikara (MHA) nation; Navajo Nation; and Southern Ute. The designated representative from Hopi was not able to attend.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Following an Invocation by Chairman Bobby Gonzalez of the Caddo Nation and Welcoming Remarks from USEA President & CEO, Mark W. Menezes, William (Bill) D. McCabe, Co-Chair of the FECM Tribal Working Group and representative of the Navajo Nation, opened the meeting with gratitude to DOE, USEA and to tribal leaders who traveled to Washington, D.C. He acknowledged the historical significance of the gathering and emphasized its role in the broader journey of tribal resilience and self-determination.

McCabe reflected on the group's evolution through six prior meetings and credited the vision of two DOE Assistant Secretaries from the two previous administrations for its formation. Each member was formally appointed by tribal leadership, reinforcing the group's legitimacy and its opportunity to engage directly with DOE resources and expertise.

Recognizing the rapid shifts in the energy sector – particularly under the current administration's push

for energy dominance – McCabe posed guiding questions on how tribes can meaningfully participate in and keep pace with industry and federal developments. He emphasized the importance of resource ownership, with a primary focus on fossil fuels (oil, gas, coal), while also acknowledging uranium and renewables.

He closed by honoring his Navajo heritage through a traditional clan introduction, reinforcing cultural identity as central to the group's work.

Demi Morishige, Secretary of the Working Group and representative of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, echoed McCabe's messages of collaboration and invited members to engage with her directly. Together, their remarks reinforced a shared commitment to advancing tribal energy development through partnership, integrity, and unity.

Department of Energy Leadership Remarks

Tala Goudarzi, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Fossil Energy & Carbon Management (FECM), delivered formal remarks expressing appreciation for tribal leaders and partners, including the Navajo Nation, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Caddo Nation, Crow Nation, Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, MHA Nation, Hopi Nation, and Fort Peck Tribes. She thanked former Deputy Secretary Mark Menezes and acknowledged Joe Giove's role in maintaining the group's continuity through multiple administrative transitions.

Participating in her first Tribal Working Group meeting, Goudarzi emphasized FECM's commitment to supporting tribal energy development and listening to tribal priorities. She reaffirmed alignment with national energy goals focused on security, economic growth, job creation, and market expansion – driven by full utilization of U.S. energy resources, including fossil fuels and critical minerals.

The remarks highlighted the role of innovation in making energy development cleaner and more efficient, including technologies for reclaiming value from mine waste and abandoned infrastructure. The remarks noted that the liquified natural gas (LNG) sector currently experienced rapid growth, with the U.S. supplying nearly 25% of global demand. Coal also received renewed federal support, especially in the context of metallurgical coal and the extraction of critical minerals from coal ash – benefits that could directly impact tribal lands.

She further discussed the DOE's Critical Minerals Initiative and efforts to build regional and national supply chains, with multiple projects involving tribal communities. In closing, she reaffirmed DOE's commitment to tribal partnership, energy production, national security, and workforce development.

Brian Kellogg, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs, introduced himself and outlined his office's role as a central access point for external stakeholders navigating DOE programs. Drawing on prior service in the Trump administration, he emphasized the office's role in guiding tribes through DOE's structure and coordinating across federal agencies. Kellogg described the current energy environment as a "golden age" and urged tribes to take full advantage of emerging opportunities. He cited interagency collaboration and accessibility as core priorities and encouraged ongoing dialogue with tribal representatives. He concluded by reaffirming his commitment to support tribal engagement and resource development.

HISTORY AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TRIBAL WORKING GROUP

Joe Giove, Director of Business Operations at DOE-FECM, provided a retrospective on the formation and evolution of the Tribal Energy Working Group (TWG), tracing its origins to 2019 under former Assistant Secretary Steve Winberg. In response to tribal concerns about inadequate federal support, DOE partnered with USEA to host an initial meeting in Moab, Utah, focused on supporting tribal energy

development in oil, gas, and coal. Although plans for regular meetings were disrupted by COVID-19 and administrative transitions, engagement resumed under former Assistant Secretary Brad Crabtree.

Based on tribal-only discussions, DOE supported the creation of a formal TWG to institutionalize engagement and remain outside FACA requirements. The TWG reached quorum and held its first formal meeting in October 2024 in Medora, North Dakota. Interim leadership was elected and a formal election six weeks later confirmed Bill McCabe as Chair and Demi Morishige as Secretary. A virtual meeting in January 2025 ensured continuity during leadership transitions and marked the launch of the official TWG website. DOE also secured \$100,000 to support tribal technical assistance and project due diligence.

Mr. Giove concluded by emphasizing the TWG's bipartisan roots, adaptive structure, and growing impact in strengthening DOE-tribal partnerships.

Update on the Tribal Working Group

Bill McCabe provided an update on the formalization of the Tribal Working Group, which now includes eight officially designated tribal representatives, with one pending confirmation from the Jicarilla Apache Nation. A charter and bylaws have been finalized to establish the group's structure and legitimacy. Each member tribe has formally appointed a representative, including McCabe, who was designated by Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren.

The TWG supports tribes actively involved in fossil energy development, such as oil, gas, and coal. While not representative of all 574 federally recognized tribes, the group builds on the legacy of earlier alliances like the Council of Energy Resource Tribes (CERT). The current TWG charter allows for 5 to 11 member tribes to ensure both representation and operational efficiency.

McCabe underscored the economic importance of energy resources to tribal nations, citing the Navajo Nation's \$500 million annual budget, which relies heavily on fossil energy revenues. He raised concerns about the potential for federal funding cuts and emphasized the need for self-sufficiency and sovereignty through energy development.

He called on DOE to uphold its trust responsibility by providing technical assistance, funding, and collaboration to advance tribal energy priorities. Seven of the eight TWG members attended. Individual tribal presentations on current projects, challenges, and opportunities for DOE partnership made up the rest of the meeting's duration.

TRIBAL ENERGY PRIORITIES

The Caddo Nation

Bobby Gonzalez, the Chairman of the Caddo Nation of Oklahoma, opened his remarks with appreciation for fellow tribal leaders and working group members. He highlighted the Caddo Nation's deep roots in the region, with ancestral lands covering northeast Texas, southwest Arkansas, northwest Louisiana, and eastern Oklahoma. As one of only two tribes indigenous to Oklahoma, the Caddo people have a long history in the region.

The Chairman addressed the challenges tribes face in energy development, particularly regulatory barriers, limited technical capacity, and lingering stereotypes about tribal capabilities. He emphasized the need to break down these barriers and build awareness, education, and technical support among tribes – especially those lacking experience or resources in the energy sector.

He called for greater collaboration and knowledge sharing, including the development of a white paper

with USEA to present tribal energy challenges and solutions to the Department of Energy. He underscored the opportunity for tribes to achieve energy sovereignty and economic self-sufficiency by responsibly developing their oil, gas, and mineral resources.

Drawing from his experience in the midstream energy sector and national energy policy, he stressed the importance of including tribal voices in shaping the future of energy development. He concluded by sharing the Caddo Nation's current initiative with the University of Oklahoma to address abandoned wells and methane emissions, with the goal of both environmental remediation and renewed production on tribal lands.

The Crow Tribe

C.J. Stewart, a long-standing council member from the Crow Tribe, reflected on the tribe's energy journey, leadership challenges, and the motivation behind forming a working group focused on fossil fuel tribes. He emphasized the importance of tribal self-determination, stewardship of natural resources, and economic sustainability through energy development. The Crow Tribe has historically relied on coal as a key economic driver but is actively exploring renewable energy and efficiency initiatives to diversify its portfolio and improve resilience.

The speaker detailed past efforts to assert tribal control over energy resources, including advocacy stemming from the 2005 Energy Act, navigating hostile federal policies under the previous administration, and resisting initiatives perceived as disrespectful to tribal sovereignty. He underscored the importance of partnerships, infrastructure investment, and regulatory reforms to support energy development on tribal lands.

The speaker emphasized the need for culturally aligned policies and meaningful consultation, particularly as fossil fuel tribes control a significant portion of the nation's energy resources but are often excluded from key policy discussions. Despite historical challenges, the speaker expressed hope and commitment to collective progress, and acknowledged the efforts of fellow leaders and allies who have helped advance this initiative.

Fort Peck Tribes

Wilfred Lambert, the Director of the Office of Environmental Protection for the Fort Peck Tribes in Poplar, Montana, works closely with the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Mineral Development Corporation, the tribe's mineral office.

Relatively new to these forums, Mr. Lambert noted encouragement from colleagues, who affirmed that his involvement comes at an opportune time. He shared a key challenge facing his community: a Canadian businessman recently approached his office with a proposal to bring oilfield jobs and free training to the tribe. During their discussion, Mr. Lambert described the untapped potential of the East Poplar Dome, estimated to hold 30 billion barrels of oil. However, accessing these resources has been problematic due to production issues – initial high oil yields often shift to predominantly water output over time, raising concerns about water management and treatment.

, Mr. Lambert pursued a resolution through the tribal council, which was successfully passed, allowing for collaboration with DOE. Lambert expressed his commitment to continuing this important work and contributing to future energy and economic development discussions for his tribe.

The Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope

In response

Doreen Levitt, a representative of Alaska's Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, provided an overview of the region's tribal structure, history with oil and gas development, and current policy positions. Unlike tribes in the Lower 48, Alaska Natives are subject to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA),

which extinguished aboriginal land title and created Native-owned corporations in place of reservations. As a result, Alaskan tribes are landless, with land held by regional and village corporations.

The Arctic Slope region, comparable in size to Minnesota, has a 50-year history with the oil and gas industry. While the region opposes offshore development due to cultural and subsistence concerns – particularly bowhead whale hunting – it supports onshore projects such as Alaska LNG, which provide essential revenue through taxation. Ms. Levitt noted the high cost of living and infrastructure in the area and emphasized the unified approach of the region's trilateral leadership: the tribal government, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, and North Slope Borough. The region engages actively at the federal level, reflecting growing attention to Arctic energy and policy issues.

The Navajo Nation

Bill McCabe, Vice President, Navajo Nation Oil and Gas Company (NNOGC), provided an update on the Navajo Nation's energy landscape, highlighting both longstanding challenges and emerging opportunities. NNOGC, a sovereign, federally chartered Section 17 corporation, operates as a vertically integrated energy company. With over four decades of industry experience, McCabe emphasized the Nation's push for energy independence and economic development.

The Navajo Nation spans 17 million acres across Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico, rich in oil, gas, coal, uranium, helium, and renewable energy. Historically, the Nation received minimal benefit from resource extraction, but NNOGC has increased its ownership stake in key assets, including a 36% share in the Greater Aneth oil field.

Significant untapped resources remain, including:

- Natural Gas: 1–3 trillion cubic feet in the San Juan Basin, constrained by regulatory barriers.
- Helium: 6–20 billion cubic feet with high concentrations, offering transformative potential.
- Oil: Up to 2 billion barrels in deeper formations like the Mancos Shale.

Clean energy initiatives include hydrogen pilots using stranded gas and carbon sequestration research.

Despite internal opposition to extractive development, McCabe stressed the importance of responsible energy production to address infrastructure deficits, especially in electrification and water access.

Coal remains critical, with two of five regional power plants still operational. The Nation continues to explore coal gasification and synthetic fuel technologies to revitalize the sector. Uranium and renewables (solar, wind) offer long-term promise but face development hurdles due to environmental legacies and underinvestment.

Mr. McCabe called for streamlined permitting, noting current processes can delay projects by 5–8 years.

He concluded by highlighting that tribes hold approximately 10% of U.S. energy resources yet generate under \$2 billion annually – far below their \$80 billion potential. Federal coordination and investment are essential to close this gap and support tribal energy sovereignty.

The MHA Nation

Mark Fox, the Chairman of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara (MHA) Nation, started his presentation by providing a historic overview. The MHA Nation's territory was formally recognized under the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, covering parts of four states and totaling 13 million acres – significantly reduced from its original expanse. Earlier treaties, including the 1825 Atkinson & O'Fallon Treaty, affirmed sovereign rights such as trade and legal authority. Historically a riverine, agricultural society along the Missouri River, the MHA Nation suffered further land loss through the General Allotment Act and the

Garrison Dam project, which submerged over 255,000 acres of fertile land and displaced many tribal members.

Despite historic disruptions, the MHA Nation continues to undertake major economic and energy development initiatives:

- **Oil & Gas:** Located in the Bakken Formation, the Nation uses revenues from energy leases to fund critical infrastructure and services.
- **Agriculture:** The Native GreenGrow (NG2) project uses captured gas to power indoor agriculture, targeting 2 million pounds of food production annually.
- **LNG & Exports:** The Nation is developing infrastructure to export liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Asian markets via Canadian ports.
- **Strategic Petroleum Reserve:** Plans are underway for a 5-million-barrel storage facility to possibly support U.S. SPR capacity.
- **Power & Data Infrastructure:** Responding to AI and data center energy demands, MHA is advancing blue hydrogen and ammonia projects, alongside onsite data processing powered by tribal gas resources.

The Nation seeks to enhance sovereignty and economic independence through:

- Reduced federal dependency with continued trust responsibility
- Streamlined federal processes and improved royalty disbursement
- Elimination of dual taxation and regulatory burdens
- Equitable access to infrastructure and energy funding

During an intertribal dialogue, Chairman Fox and other tribal leaders highlighted systemic issues with the DOE Loan Guarantee Program. Despite submitting multiple proposals, including hydrogen and power generation projects, MHA's applications faced significant delays and were never approved. With only one tribal project approved nationally, leaders stressed the need for more accessible, transparent, and responsive federal financing programs.

Participants reiterated natural gas's strategic role in North America and emphasized partnerships with academic institutions for blue hydrogen development. The participants also discussed export routes and integration of renewables part of long-term energy strategies. A short advocacy video is in development to present these initiatives to federal stakeholders and legislators.

The Southern Ute

The Southern Ute Indian Tribe, represented in the Tribal Working Group by Demi Morishige, has over 70 years of experience in energy development, rooted in the Upper San Juan Basin. Under the leadership of Chairman Leonard C. Burch in the 1980s, the Tribe pursued energy self-determination and expanded investments into the Gulf, Powder River, Permian, and San Juan Basins. The Tribe strongly advocates Tribal lands not be equated with federal or public lands in regulatory frameworks, emphasizing the protection of Tribal sovereignty.

A current strategic focus is a carbon capture project led by Red Cedar Gathering Company, a joint venture with Kinder Morgan in which the Tribe holds majority ownership. The facility, expected online by July, will capture and sequester 300,000 metric tons of CO₂ annually in the Permian Basin. The project leverages the federal 45Q tax credit, which the Tribe considers essential for financial viability and urges policymakers to preserve, including support for elective pay structures.

Due to complex land ownership known as a checkerboard reservation, securing CO₂ rights and finalizing tax equity partnerships remain ongoing challenges. The Tribe also actively manages its own air quality regulatory programs, though staffing limitations highlight the need for National Environmental Policy Act

(NEPA) reform and Bureau of Land Management partnership to enhance capacity.

Southern Ute leaders call for modernization of the Tribal Energy Resource Agreement (TERA) framework. They recommend allowing Tribes to selectively assume functions under TERA to reflect diverse operational capacities and maintain flexibility. The Tribe urges inclusive consultation to ensure TERA implementation supports all Tribal contexts without imposing one-size-fits-all models.

The session concluded with a reaffirmation of the importance of intertribal collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and unified advocacy for expanded access to energy financing and infrastructure.

PAST RESOURCES AND BRIEF DOE OFFICE INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and its affiliated offices have expanded efforts to strengthen engagement with tribal nations on energy development, policy, and technical support. This session provided a brief overview of key DOE programs and partnerships that support tribal energy priorities.

USEA-FECM Tribal Energy Engagement Overview

Since 2019, the U.S. Energy Association (USEA), in partnership with the Department of Energy's Office of Fossil Energy and Carbon Management (FECM), has hosted a series of tribal-focused workshops (as noted in the beginning of this document) and webinars aimed at promoting education, dialogue, and collaboration on energy issues. Notable efforts include the *National Tribal Energy Roundtable* (concluding in November 2024) and the *Indian Energy Minerals Forum* (launched in 2021).

In response to tribal feedback, USEA facilitated exclusive virtual meetings between tribal representatives and DOE offices – including the Offices of Carbon Management and Resource Sustainability – as well as NETL, to enhance access to federal expertise. These private sessions led to actionable outcomes, such as connecting Chairman Gonzalez with federal officials regarding direct lithium extraction activities on ancestral Caddo lands.

These efforts receive funding through the USEA-FECM “Consensus Agreement,” which supports domestic and international outreach to advance energy access, affordability, and sustainability. USEA emphasizes that its tribal-related work is guided by tribal input and aims solely to support partner missions and energy equity for tribal communities.

Overview of U.S. DOE Office of Indian Energy Programs and Activities

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs (IE), established as an independent office in 2010, supports tribal energy development, efficiency, and cost stabilization.

Although currently without a Senate-confirmed director, Acting Director David Conrad leads the office during a transitional period, temporarily delaying some funding decisions.

IE supported over 400 technical assistance efforts and approximately 300 tribal energy projects, primarily in renewable energy. The office also provides critical support through its Tribal Energy Navigator, educational webinars, and technical outreach.

Key initiatives include:

- Indian Country Energy and Infrastructure Working Group (ICEIWG): A tribal advisory forum.
- Annual Tribal Energy Program Review: A collaborative learning event in Colorado.
- Tribal Energy Summit (biennial): A policy-focused event in Washington, D.C.

Despite leadership constraints, IE sees significant staff growth and continues to collaborate across DOE and national labs. Recent efforts, such as a \$72 million loan for a tribal solar microgrid, highlight expanding opportunities. IE encourages tribal engagement to guide future priorities and maintain strong support for tribal energy sovereignty.

National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL)

Steve Witmer, a Tribal Liaison based at NETL's Pittsburgh office, serves as the Tribal Liaison for the laboratory. In this role, he is available as a point of contact for tribal stakeholders with questions or needs related to NETL-managed projects, particularly those involving National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance and tribal engagement.

Witmer supports NEPA compliance across a range of DOE programs beyond fossil energy, including grid deployment, manufacturing, and energy supply chain initiatives. In his first year, he participated in a formal tribal consultation involving a proposed Manufacturing Energy Supply Chain (MESCC) project in Washington State. This engagement, conducted with the Colville Reservation, resulted in the tribe being invited to join the applicant's Community Advisory Board – an outcome facilitated through the NEPA process.

He emphasized his availability to support tribes navigating NEPA requirements or engaging with NETL programs and expressed interest in listening and learning to improve future tribal engagement practices. NETL maintains offices in Pittsburgh, PA; Morgantown, WV; and Albany, OR.

Applying the Indian Energy Purchase Preference (IEPP)

Raymond Redcorn, representing the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Indian Energy and a citizen of the Osage Nation, presented on the Indian Energy Purchase Preference (IEPP) and its potential application in refilling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR).

Established under the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the IEPP allows federal agencies to prioritize energy purchases from tribally majority-owned businesses, provided market rates and standard terms are met. Redcorn distinguished the IEPP from the Buy Indian Act, noting that while the latter includes individual tribal members and is used primarily by the Department of the Interior and Indian Health Service, the IEPP is narrower in scope and energy-specific but applicable across all federal agencies.

The session was exploratory, with Redcorn seeking tribal feedback on potential interest in applying the IEPP to SPR procurement. No formal commitment has been made, but input will inform future policy considerations.

CESER - Strategic Petroleum Reserve

Warren Wilczewski, Director of Operations and Readiness at DOE's Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response - Office of Petroleum Reserves, provided an overview of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) and its current operations. Although the office manages multiple reserves, including a heating oil reserve in the Northeast, the primary focus of the discussion was on the SPR, which constitutes 99.7% of the office's storage capacity.

Warren emphasized that the SPR is currently in an active "fill" phase, receiving approximately 750,000 barrels of oil per week – a pace expected to continue through mid-next year, subject to funding. The SPR emerged in response to the 1970s oil embargoes to ensure national energy security during major supply disruptions. Its maximum capacity is 713.5 million barrels, with a functional capacity of about 680 million; it currently holds around 400 million barrels.

The SPR consists of four Gulf Coast storage sites capable of handling both sweet and sour crude. Warren noted that tribal energy producers, who generally produce sweet, light crude oil, may be well-positioned to meet SPR specifications. However, suppliers, who are responsible for all associated logistics like transportation and delivery, must be the ones to deliver the oil directly to SPR.

He explained that the reserve can receive oil at a rate of approximately 225,000 barrels per day per site but can release oil at a much higher rate – up to 4.5 million barrels per day in total. This differential ensures rapid market response in emergencies, while gradual acquisition prevents market disruption.

Future crude purchases depend on Congressional appropriations, as current law still mandates sales of up to 80 million barrels. Nonetheless, current administration policy supports refilling the SPR, and tribal engagement is being sought as part of this broader initiative.

Warren concluded by encouraging stakeholders to review existing procurement documents and specifications available online, noting that while procedures are well-established, engagement from Indian Country could play a role in future oil procurement strategies.

Discussion of Tribal Interests in Energy Infrastructure and SPR Engagement

Following a presentation on energy procurement, tribal leaders discussed energy infrastructure concerns related to the Gulf Coast and surrounding regions. Leaders focused on the Mid-Valley Pipeline, which crosses Caddo ancestral lands, highlighting ongoing cultural and territorial impacts.

The participants raised concern regarding FERC regulations, including Order 2023, which impose financial and procedural barriers on tribal participation in electricity markets. A petition supported by the Caddo Nation seeks regulatory exemptions to reduce high upfront costs that hinder tribal project development.

Discussion also addressed the SPR. A proposed SPR facility in North Dakota remains conceptual due to logistical constraints, while current SPR operations involve four government-owned pipelines on the Gulf Coast. Solicitations are structured in 250,000-barrel parcels with contracts awarded based on index-plus pricing and limited to U.S.-produced crude oil.

Tribal leaders emphasized the energy and economic significance of the Gulf Coast, much of which lies on ancestral Caddo land. Proposals from companies like ExxonMobil and Kinder Morgan underscore the need for increased tribal capacity and ownership. The discussion also focused on DOE loan access to acquire energy assets and ensure tribal revenue participation.

In closing, participants acknowledged the complexities of tribal entry into national energy markets. Building tribal capacity, enhancing technical knowledge, and they identified both leveraging strategic partnerships and federal support as key to enabling effective tribal engagement in programs like the SPR.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: CUTTING RED TAPE

The roundtable discussion focused on systemic challenges in natural resource governance and energy development. Tribal representatives provided detailed accounts of longstanding inequities, particularly in regions like the Anadarko Basin, where resource extraction occurs without corresponding tribal benefit due to regulatory loopholes and outdated federal practices. Participants voiced their broader concerns regarding the role of federal agencies – especially the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Department of the Interior – in hindering tribal self-determination, transparency, and access to funding. These conversations underscored a shared tribal demand for structural reform, direct engagement in program design, and federal accountability to treaty-based obligations, and called for a coordinated, tribal-led approach to advancing energy sovereignty, environmental stewardship, and equitable

economic development across Indian Country.

Inequities in Energy Resource Development within the Anadarko Basin

A tribal representative raised concerns regarding persistent inequities in energy resource development across the Anadarko Basin – one of the nation’s most productive oil and gas regions. Despite tribal lands being located above key geological formations, no has drilled wells directly on these lands. This is largely due to the widespread use of horizontal drilling techniques, which enable operators to extract resources from adjacent, non-tribal properties – effectively bypassing tribal ownership and associated benefits.

The representative cited systemic disparities, particularly the slow and inefficient federal processes for tribal lease approvals compared to the expedited treatment granted to private entities. In many cases, tribal citizens wait years to receive lease information, while industry actors secure approvals within days.

Although horizontal drilling under tribal lands has yielded production rates as high as 700 barrels per day, federal agencies frequently disclaim responsibility by referencing surface boundaries – despite the federal government’s trust obligations to tribes.

The speaker urged the Department of Energy (DOE) to convene tribal stakeholders to identify regulatory barriers, capacity needs, and structural challenges. A coordinated report from such an initiative could be instrumental in advocating for funding, improving regulatory frameworks, and protecting tribal energy interests – particularly as energy demand grows from sectors such as artificial intelligence and amid mounting regulatory pressure from agencies like the EPA and the Department of the Interior. One proposal discussed was for DOE to allocate dedicated funding (e.g., \$100,000) to support this effort.

Tribal Energy Governance and Federal Relationship Challenges

The Working Group also addressed broader governance issues and identified deep-rooted concerns regarding the federal government’s role in tribal natural resource management, particularly through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Department of the Interior (DOI). Participants expressed that current structures often obstruct tribal autonomy while failing to meet longstanding treaty obligations.

Key Issues Identified:

Mistrust in BIA and Federal Oversight: Tribes described the BIA as inefficient and opaque, with frequent delays in resource-related approvals and perceived favoritism toward non-tribal entities in leasing processes. Outdated systems and poor communication continue to hinder tribal development efforts.

Sovereignty and Jurisdictional Complexities: Tribes are increasingly expected to assume responsibilities – such as overseeing oil and gas operations – without full access to relevant records or decision-making authority. Complex land status arrangements (e.g., checkerboarding) further complicate enforcement and jurisdiction.

Overriding Royalty Interests and Orphan Wells: Participants raised concerns about overriding royalty interests, which can undermine the economic viability of wells and contribute to the growth of orphan wells – creating long-term environmental and financial liabilities for tribal governments.

Funding Distribution and Grant Administration: Tribes criticized several federal programs, including those under DOE’s Loan Programs Office and Methane Emissions Reduction Consortium (MERC), for poor tribal engagement and inefficient implementation. In one case, a \$50 million emissions grant awarded to a consortium was later discredited, resulting in reputational harm to participating tribes. Tribes are now seeking to redirect or manage such funds through tribal-led

mechanisms.

Federal Accountability and Tribal-Led Solutions: Tribes called for a shift toward self-determination – not to relieve the federal government of its trust responsibilities, but to enable tribes to better manage their own resources. Participants urged agencies to expand the use of Requests for Information (RFIs) to better incorporate tribal perspectives in federal program design.

State Relations and Infrastructure Development: While some tribes reported collaborative relationships with state governments (e.g., Colorado), others – especially those in multi-state jurisdictions like the Navajo Nation – faced ongoing legal and policy challenges.

Tribal representatives emphasized the urgent need for structural reform to ensure federal programs genuinely support tribal energy sovereignty, economic development, and environmental stewardship. Tribes reiterated their call for a true government-to-government partnership – centered on transparency, direct access to funding, meaningful consultation, and full recognition of tribal rights and treaty obligations.

CLOSING DISCUSSION: TRIBAL ENERGY PATH FORWARD

The Tribal Working Group held its first formal meeting to introduce its members and mission to the new Department of Energy (DOE) leadership and to convey tribal perspectives on energy development and articulate the urgent need for more inclusive, effective federal engagement.

Purpose and Context

The TWG aimed to brief DOE leadership on the current landscape facing Indian Country – particularly in clean fossil energy development, capacity limitations, and regulatory barriers. The TWG presented the Navajo Nation as a case study, highlighting both progress made under the 2019 interagency MOU (DOE, DOI, Commerce) and the challenges posed by shifting federal priorities. Tribal leaders underscored that abrupt policy changes severely disrupt long-term planning, especially given the structural and bureaucratic constraints many tribes face.

Participants called for federal re-engagement, tailored support, and time to adjust to the “new era of energy dominance.” Concerns were raised over duplicative environmental reviews under NEPA, which significantly delay tribal energy projects. One key proposal: exempt projects from NEPA where tribes self-certify compliance with their own environmental laws.

Governance and Structure

The meeting reaffirmed the TWG’s charter, with representatives from eight tribes and three open slots remaining. The meeting also stressed adherence to the current structures and procedures for representatives that were dictated by DOE Headquarters General Council, which will ensure that the group does not fall under Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).

Key Themes and Recommendations

Capital Access & Financing: Tribes face high barriers to entry for DOE programs such as the Loan Programs Office. A call was made for tribal-specific financial tools to support energy development.

NEPA Reform: Leaders recommended streamlining environmental review processes to reduce redundancy and accelerate project timelines on tribal lands.

Capacity Building: Tribes need increased technical expertise, institutional infrastructure, and support to establish tribal energy offices and manage complex projects.

Interagency Coordination: The tribes proposed a “one-stop shop” approach to reduce fragmentation and improve federal service delivery for tribal energy initiatives.

Strategic Federal Engagement: Tribes called for sustained engagement with Congress – especially key committees and caucuses like the Western Caucus, to elevate tribal energy priorities. They emphasized the need for repeated interaction, not just one-off meetings.

White Paper Development: The group proposed drafting a comprehensive white paper to document specific regulatory barriers, case studies, and actionable federal policy recommendations.

Project Finance Education: Participants proposed a "Project Finance Boot Camp" to equip tribal members with skills in finance, permitting, and energy project planning.

Direct Political Engagement: An attitude frequently pushed for: urgency. The administration is motivated and fast-moving, creating a rare opportunity for tribal communities to advance their priorities. Participants urged leaders to seize the momentum, build alliances – including with reelection-seeking politicians – and propose clear, concrete initiatives such as expediting permits for oil, gas, and coal projects.

Systemic Challenges

Participants noted systemic issues including:

- Inconsistent agency engagement across regions
- Diverse tribal governance structures
- Delays in energy project approvals with long-term economic consequences

There was a strong consensus that future strategies must be rooted in tribal-specific data, respect for sovereignty, and alignment with community priorities.

Forward Planning

The next meetings are tentatively scheduled for September and November, with the University of Oklahoma hosting in September and the Colorado School of Mines in November. These meetings will follow a structured format designed to foster both focused tribal discussions and broader federal, industry, and academic engagement. Day 1 of each meeting will be reserved exclusively for tribal-only sessions, providing an opportunity for tribal representatives to engage in candid conversations and collaborative planning. On Day 2, the discussions will expand to include federal, industry and academic stakeholders, allowing for broader dialogue and partnership-building across sectors.

Closing Reflection

The meeting reaffirmed that tribal nations are critical to America’s energy future. Through unified advocacy, strategic planning, and direct federal partnerships, tribes seek to unlock the full potential of their 56 million acres of natural resources. The path forward is one of energy development, efficiency, and empowerment – with tribes leading the way in shaping a sovereign, sustainable energy future.

MEETING AGENDA

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM | Welcome & Opening Remarks

- **Mark W. Menezes**, President & CEO, United States Energy Association (USEA)
- **Invocation by Tribal Elder**
- **William D. McCabe**, Co-chair, FECM Tribal Energy Management Group
- **Demi Morishige**, Secretary, FECM Tribal Energy Management Group
- **Tala Goudarzi**, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, United States Department of Energy, Office of Fossil Energy & Carbon Management (FECM)
- **Bryan Kellogg**, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs, United States Department of Energy

9:00 AM – 9:15 AM | History & Establishment of the Tribal Working Group

- **Joseph Giove**, Director of Business Operations, United States Department of Energy, Office of Fossil Energy & Carbon Management (FECM)

9:15 AM – 10:30 AM | Tribal Energy Priorities: Individual Tribal Presentations *(15 min per tribe)*

Each tribal representative presents on energy initiatives, challenges, and priorities:

- **Chairman Bobby Gonzalez**, Caddo Nation
- **C.J. Stewart**, Crow Nation
- **Wilfred Lambert**, Fort Peck Tribes
- **Dr. Carrie Joseph**, Hopi Nation (virtual)
- **Doreen Leavitt**, Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope

10:30 – 10:45 | Break

10:45 – 11:45 AM | Tribal Energy Priorities: Individual Tribal Presentations *(15 min per tribe)*

- **Chairman Mark Fox**, Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara (MHA) Nation
- **William McCabe**, Navajo Nation
- **Demi Morishige**, Southern Ute Indian Tribe

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM | Lunch Break (Working Lunch Discussion)

12:45 PM – 1:00 PM | Past Resources and Brief DOE Offices Introduction

- **Alex Krowka**, Deputy Program Director, United States Energy Association (USEA)
- **Dr. Tommy Jones**, United States Department of Energy, Office of Indian Energy (IE)
- **Warren Wilczewski**, United States Department of Energy, Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response, Office of Petroleum Reserves (CESER-OPR)
- **Stephen Witmer**, National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL)

1:00 – 1:30 | CESER-OPR Indian Energy Purchase Preference

- **Warren Wilczewski**, United States Department of Energy, Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response, Office of Petroleum Reserves (CESER-OPR)
- **Raymond Redcorn**, United States Department of Energy, Office of Indian Energy (IE)

1:30 PM – 2:15 PM | Roundtable Discussion: Cutting Red Tape

- Moderator: **William D. McCabe**, Co-chair, FECM Tribal Working Group
- Discussion Topics:
 - ✓ Regulatory barriers and progress in Tribal Energy Development (Mineral rights, cross-border issues, primacy, tribal government)
 - ✓ Review of Prior Mandates on Reducing Tribal Energy Barriers
 - ✓ FECM and IE Coordination Efforts
 - ✓ DOE Leadership Responses; Aligning Policies with new energy landscape
 - ✓ Preparation for DOI Consultation

2:15 PM – 2:30 PM | Break

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM | Roundtable Discussion: Tribal Energy Path Forward

- Moderator: **William D. McCabe**, Co-chair, FECM Tribal Working Group
 - ✓ Identify four emerging 4 themes

3:30 PM – 3:45 PM | DOE Closing Statements

- Commitments & next steps from DOE leadership

3:45 PM – 4:00 PM | Closing Remarks

- **William D. McCabe**, Co-chair, FECM Tribal Working Group
- Closing reflection by tribal leadership

APPENDICES LINKS

- [Southern Ute Indian Tribe Growth Fund](#)
- [Presentation of the Mandan, Hidatsa, & Arikara Nation](#)
- [The North Slope Iñupiat & Oil and Gas Development on Their Ancestral Homelands](#)
- [Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes Energy Overview](#)
- [Crow Energy Report](#)
- [Applying the Indian Energy Purchase Preference \(IEPP\): a presentation of the Office of Indian Energy, United States Department of Energy](#)
- [An Overview of the Office of Petroleum Reserves: a presentation of the Office of Petroleum Reserves, United States Department of Energy](#)