

Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe
Crow Creek Sioux Tribe
Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe
Oglala Sioux Tribe



Rosebud Sioux Tribe
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
Yankton Sioux Tribe

**THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY'S CANCELLATION
OF THE TRIBAL ENERGY ACCESS CORRIDOR IN SOUTH DAKOTA
REVERSES YEARS OF PROGRESS AND STALLS THE DEVELOPMENT OF 2 GW OF
RENEWABLE ENERGY ON TRIBAL LANDS**

August 17, 2026

We are the members of the Board of Directors and the Council of Elders of the Oceti Sakowin (pronounced O-CHET-ee Sha-KO-wee) Power Authority (OSPA). OSPA was formed by seven Sioux Tribes that share territory with the State of South Dakota for the sole purpose of developing Tribal energy projects on the lands of our member Tribes – from microgrids to power our communities to utility-scale geothermal, wind and solar farms, to upgrading the power transmission system across our reservations to bring it into the 21st century. OSPA was established in 2015 when our Charter was certified by the U.S. Department of the Interior and is 100% owned and managed by our member Tribes.

We must express our surprise and bitter disappointment over [U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright's cancellation of the pending designation of the Tribal Energy Access Corridor](#) on August 12, 2026. Congress created the National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor (NIETC) program to identify places in the country that would especially benefit from investment in transmission upgrades. These are also areas where it was extremely hard to convince utilities and investors to make the investments needed to upgrade the existing, inadequate transmission infrastructure. Our reservations are such a place – the OSPA member Tribes are among the poorest in the country and occupy the most remote rural areas of South Dakota. The national power grid here is old and inadequate – it has suffered from generations of underinvestment.

The state of South Dakota is split in half by the Missouri River and has two separate economies. East River, where Sioux Falls and Pierre are, has a modern power grid, with dozens of wind farms, and a rapidly growing and diversifying economy centered on finance, healthcare and manufacturing – all businesses that require a lot of power, delivered over a modern network. West River, where our largest land-based Tribes are located, is lagging far behind. You cannot attract business or develop your energy resources without a modern power grid. OSPA is committed to developing over 2 GW of low-cost power – a major contribution to the nation's energy needs at a time when affordability matters most to struggling Americans – but we cannot develop any of it without the transmission capacity to carry that power to where the customers are.

Modernizing the power grid will have a massive, positive impact on West River South Dakota. It will allow the Tribes to develop their geothermal, wind and solar resources – which are among the best in the country – and this development will bring literally hundreds of millions of dollars to the poorest Tribes in the nation, tens of millions of dollars to State and local governments, and hundreds of jobs. It will also allow West River to compete with East River in attracting the industries of the future – all without raising retail electric rates. And this economic impact isn't limited to the Tribes – all of West River South Dakota will benefit when the national power grid is upgraded. This is why DOE received overwhelming public support for our Corridor – the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Association, three South Dakota state legislators, and multiple Tribes and public interest groups all filed in support.

The benefit of having our Tribal lands being designated as the Tribal Energy Access Corridor is that it makes us eligible for federal funding programs that we otherwise would not have access to. This kind of federal involvement is essential because our grid infrastructure is extremely old and expensive to fix. This federal seed money will allow us to attract private capital, just like they do in East River. The designation will also speed up the federal permitting process under NEPA, which everybody – including Secretary Wright – agrees is a good thing.

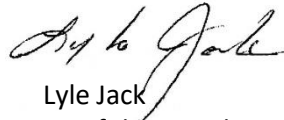
So what is Secretary Wright's real motivation in cancelling the Tribal Energy Access Corridor? In announcing the cancellation, Secretary Wright went out of his way to insult the Tribes. He said: "Transmission policy must serve the American people – not special interests or a climate-alarmist agenda" and went on to call the Tribal Energy Access Corridor "a means to advance their Green New Scam agenda. . . ." Why would a U.S. Secretary of Energy talk to Tribes like this? Four sovereign Tribal nations that are trying to secure for their people the same access to modern, adequate power transmission that the Secretary enjoys in North Dakota and Washington DC are not "special interests," "alarmists" or "scammers." It is clear that Secretary Wright only had one reason to cancel the Tribal Energy Access Corridor – to cater to his boss' bizarre hate obsession with wind farms.

We also have to express our deep disappointment with the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission (SD PUC). We just learned last week that the SD PUC sent a letter to DOE opposing our NIETC designation on February 12, 2025. And the SD PUC Vice Chairwoman Kristie Fiegen attended the [DOE announcement in Pierre on August 12](#), cheering on the cancellation of the Tribal Energy Access Corridor. It's the SD PUC's right to say whatever it wants about our NIETC designation, but during the time they were opposing us, we initiated two meetings with the SD PUC to talk about our wind energy and transmission plans, the pending Tribal Energy Access NIETC designation, and coordinating Tribal and state permitting, *and they would not tell us that they were opposing us the whole time*. We reached out to the Commissioners, and scheduled these meetings on July 15, 2025 and August 4, 2026. None of the Commissioners would attend, but we had full hour-long meetings with the SD PUC senior staff. Never once did any SD PUC representative mention opposition to the Tribal Energy Access Corridor. Is this an acceptable way for a State agency to behave?

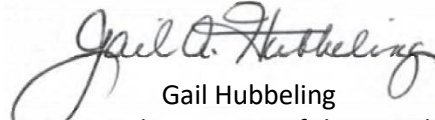
Finally, the DOE and SD PUC have done all this in secrecy. DOE routinely published comments in the NIETC proceedings on its website – well over 2,000 comments can be found there. But not the SD PUC's – neither their February 12, 2025 letter, or an earlier letter the SD PUC says it filed, can be found on the DOE website. Similarly, only the 2025 letter can be found on the SD PUC website and neither of these letters are referenced in published Commission meeting minutes. As a result, the cancellation announcement on August 12 came as a total surprise to OSPA, and to the rest of the industry. In the case of DOE, such secrecy is a violation of the federal trust responsibility and DOE's obligations under U.S. treaties with the Tribes – the obligation of federal consultation on matters that directly affect Tribes is established in Supreme Court and other federal court precedent going back decades.

The actions of both DOE and the SD PUC in cancelling the Tribal Energy Access Corridor are reprehensible – both the outcome, and the secretive, backroom process they used to get there – and an affront to Tribal sovereignty and the rule of law. Tribes have a right to the same quality transmission infrastructure that most Americans enjoy and the federal government has an obligation under treaties and the federal trust responsibility to fulfil this long overdue responsibility. OSPA calls on Secretary Wright to reverse his decision and to certify the Tribal Energy Access Corridor.

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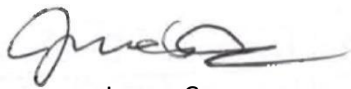


Shere Wright-Plank
Board Director
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Tribal Council Representative

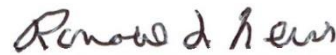
/s/ Charles Walker

Charles Walker
Board Director
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
Tribal Council Representative

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