HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

To:	Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs Republican Members
From:	Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs Staff: Hannah Hulehan (Hannah.Hulehan@mail.house.gov), Kirstin Liddell (Kirstin.Liddell@mail.house.gov), and Haig Kadian (Haig.Kadian@mail.house.gov); x6-9725
Date:	Monday, April 20, 2026
Subject:	Oversight hearing titled *"Tribal Natural Resource Development: Barriers and Successes"*

The Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs will hold an oversight hearing titled *"Tribal Natural Resource Development: Barriers and Successes"* on **Wednesday, April 22, 2026, at 10:15 a.m., in room 1334 Longworth House Office Building**.

Member offices are requested to notify Seneca Feys (Seneca.Feys@mail.house.gov) by 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 21, 2026, if their Member intends to participate in the hearing.

I. KEY MESSAGES

- Tribal natural resource development is a sovereignty issue: when tribes are permitted to develop their own resources, it creates jobs, generates revenue, and supports essential services for their communities.
- Tribal lands hold significant untapped energy and mineral resources, but development is constrained by a fragmented federal approval process involving multiple agencies and dozens of steps, creating delays and uncertainty that deter investment and prevent otherwise viable projects from moving forward.
- President Donald Trump's executive orders and Chairman Bruce Westerman's H.R. 4776, the SPEED Act, streamline permitting, reduce duplication, and provide greater certainty.
- Significant barriers remain, and additional reforms are needed to ensure that federal processes do not continue to limit development of natural resources on tribal lands.

II. WITNESSES

Panel I (Outside Experts):

- **The Hon. Frank White Clay,** Chairman, Crow Tribe of Indians, Billings, Montana
- **The Hon. Andrew Gallegos,** Councilman, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Ignacio, Colorado
- **Mr. Ken Ahmann,** Chief Operating Officer, Colusa Indian Energy, Colusa, California
- **Ms. Talia Martin,** Co-Executive Director, Tribal Energy Alternatives, Oakland, California *(Minority Witness)*

III. BACKGROUND

Overview

Tribal natural resource development is, fundamentally, a sovereignty issue. When development is successful, it supports core governmental functions—jobs, infrastructure, healthcare, education, and public safety—by harnessing a tribe's own assets.[1]

Yet, despite this potential, tribal resources remain largely undeveloped. This is due not to insufficient tribal capacity or market demand, but to the fact that development on tribal lands is governed by a fragmented, multi-agency federal approval process that introduces delays, uncertainty, and costs at nearly every stage. When projects succeed, it is often despite the federal process, not because of it. When projects fail, it is often due to federally induced delays, including missed financing windows, lost interconnection agreements, and prolonged reviews, that render projects uneconomical.

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) holds in trust tens of millions of acres of tribal surface and subsurface estate.[2] Although significant portions of that acreage are already in active development, substantially larger areas possess untapped potential.[3] Of the roughly 56 million acres of tribal reservation lands, an estimated 15 million acres contain energy and mineral resources, yet only 2.1 million acres are currently in production.[4] For example, the Crow Tribe alone has an estimated 17 billion tons of undeveloped coal, representing hundreds of billions of dollars in underutilized value.[5] This untapped potential—which includes critical minerals tied to defense supply chains and industrial capacity—weakens America's energy security and economic resilience.

Tribal natural resource development operates in a vastly different framework than does private or state-level development. Because tribal land and resources are often held in trust by the federal government, projects typically require federal involvement at multiple stages, including title and

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[1] "Indian Energy Development: Poor Management by BIA Has Hindered Energy Development on Indian Lands", U.S. Government Accountability Office, June 8, 2015, https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-15-502.pdf.
[2] Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Oversight Hearing on February 16, 2012, titled "Energy Development in Indian Country", https://www.indian.senate.gov/hearings/oversight-hearing-energy-development-indian-country/.
[3] *Id.*
[4] Terry L. Anderson, "The Energy Wealth of Indian Nations", PERC, https://www.perc.org/wp-content/uploads/old/GWBI-EnergyWealthIndianNations.pdf.
[5] "The History of Uranium Mining and the Navajo People", National Library of Medicine, PubMed Central, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3222290/.

land status verification, lease approval, rights-of-way (ROWs), environmental review and consultation, and interagency coordination. One report states that to drill on tribal lands, oil and natural gas companies must go through at least four federal agencies and 49 steps to obtain drilling permits, whereas off-reservation permits require only four steps.[6] This multi-layered federal process is a key barrier to developing resources, producing uncertainty that can deter investment in otherwise promising projects.

Delays not only postpone revenue flows but also jeopardize a project's economic viability as market conditions shift, financing costs change, or infrastructure constraints, such as transmission availability, worsen. In that sense, then, process barriers are not merely administrative; they can significantly affect whether a planned development occurs at all.[7]

Through recent executive actions, the Trump administration has directed agencies to not only expand domestic resource development but also reduce permitting delays, improve interagency coordination, and streamline federal review processes. Legislative efforts, such as H.R. 4776, the SPEED Act, led by Chairman Bruce Westerman (R-AR), reflect a similar approach. Having passed the House of Representatives on December 18, 2025, with bipartisan support, the SPEED Act reduces duplicative environmental review, limits litigation-driven delays, and provides greater certainty for projects affecting tribal trust resources.

When freed from regulatory burdens, tribes across the country are demonstrating that responsible natural resource development can produce durable economic benefits, particularly where processes are more predictable, coordinated, and timely.

The Federal Development Pathway on Tribal Lands

Development on tribal lands proceeds through a sequence of federal approvals, each of which can independently delay or halt a project. Although each step may be intended to serve a distinct legal purpose, the cumulative effect is a fragmented system in which bureaucracy, rather than resource potential, often determines whether development occurs.

The agencies most commonly involved in the federal development pathway on tribal lands include the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), which handles leasing, ROWs, and trust approvals; the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), which oversees drilling permits and inspection and enforcement functions applied to Indian mineral operations; the Office of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR), which manages royalty collection, verification, and payment reporting; and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE), which serves as the surface coal regulatory authority on Indian lands.[8] The Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA) ultimately determines how and when revenues are disbursed.[9] Additional agencies may be implicated depending on project conditions (e.g., wetlands, endangered species, or

[6] Sierra Crane-Murdoch, "The Other Bakken Boom: A Tribe Atop the Nation's Biggest Oil Play", PERC, https://www.perc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/WEB-Bakken-Case-Study.pdf.
[7] *Id.*
[8] "Mineral Leasing on Individual Indian and Tribal Lands", U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, https://www.bia.gov/service/leasing/mineral-leasing.
[9] "Office of Natural Resources Revenue Indian Outreach: Frequently Asked Questions From Indian Mineral Owners", U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Natural Resources Revenue, December 2024, https://onrr.gov/document/BlueBookFAQ.pdf.

transmission infrastructure), further complicating coordination and introducing additional project reviews. The result is a system where paperwork and bureaucracy often matter more than the resource itself.

Tribal projects alone face this unique multi-agency, stop-and-go process, as trust status requires federal approvals that often trigger NEPA review. Further, DOI's workflows still rely on manual processing and fragmented systems that add time and error risk.[10]

I. Land Status and Title

On Indian lands, the threshold determination is whether the project's footprint occupies land classified as fee simple, trust, or restricted fee. DOI's own description of these classifications is direct: fee simple land can be alienated or encumbered without federal approval; trust land cannot be alienated or encumbered (including through leasing) without approval of the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary); and restricted fee similarly requires approval to alienate or encumber.[11]

This distinction determines whether federal involvement is required at the outset. Where trust or restricted status applies, projects must resolve title, ownership, and consent issues before any substantive permitting decision can be reached. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has identified limitations in the DOI's land title and ownership data systems as a recurring constraint that slows initial determinations and introduces early-stage uncertainty.[12] On fractionated lands, where ownership may be divided among numerous allottees, these issues are magnified and can delay or complicate project timelines before formal permitting even begins.

II. Leasing and Mineral Agreements

Once land status and title are established, development typically proceeds through mineral leasing or negotiated agreements under federal law. There are several pathways for pursuing leases for tribal energy development on tribal land (see Figure 1).

[10] "Fee to Trust Land Acquisitions", U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, https://www.bia.gov/bia/ots/fee-to-trust.
[11] *Id.*
[12] "Indian Energy Development: Poor Management by BIA Has Hindered Energy Development on Indian Lands", U.S. Government Accountability Office, June 8, 2015, https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-15-502.pdf.

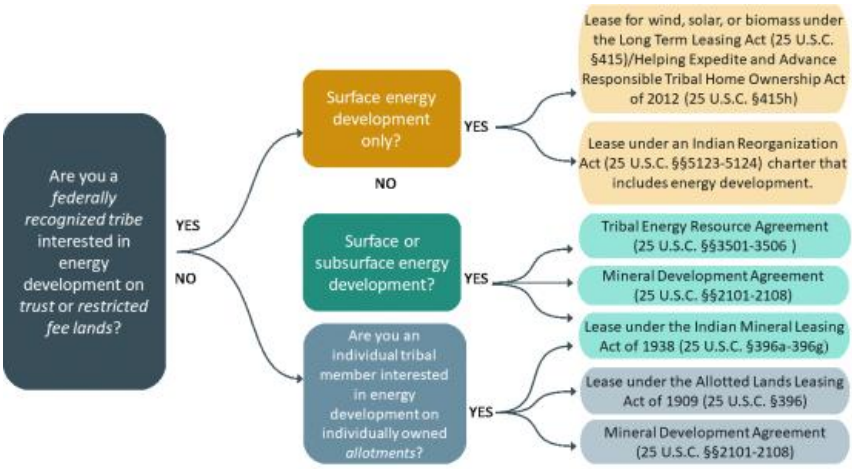

Figure 1. Flowchart of Potential Leases or Agreements for Tribal Energy Development on Tribal Lands. **Source:** Congressional Research Service, 2023.

Surface leasing, including commercial, residential, and certain energy-related uses, is generally governed by the Long-Term Leasing Act, with the Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Home Ownership Act (HEARTH Act) providing a pathway for tribes to approve leases under pre-approved tribal regulations without case-by-case Secretarial approval.

For subsurface resource development, the principal development instruments on Indian lands are: (1) leases under the Indian Mineral Leasing framework and (2) negotiated minerals agreements under the Indian Mineral Development Act (IMDA).[13] Mineral leasing on tribal lands generally requires the Secretary's approval[14] and is governed by BIA-promulgated regulations.[15]

Although leasing approval is often framed as discrete, it is embedded within a broader interagency framework. A BIA-approved lease triggers subsequent federal responsibilities, including BLM's operational oversight, ONRR's royalty collection and reporting functions, and BTFA's role in revenue distribution. [16] Consequently, leasing decisions are functionally linked to downstream compliance and revenue processes.

In practice, this stage is a significant source of delay. GAO has found that BIA's management limitations, including inconsistent processes and the absence of comprehensive tracking of review timelines, can extend review and approval periods well beyond expected timeframes. These delays increase project costs and undermine economic viability, even where statutory authorities contemplate more defined timelines.[17]

Congress established firm deadlines in IMDA: the Secretary must approve or disapprove a Minerals Agreement within 180 days of submission or 60 days after compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Although this structure can improve predictability,[18] IMDA agreements remain subject to broader federal requirements and interagency coordination, meaning they do not eliminate the underlying delays associated with the full development process.

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[13] 25 U.S.C. § 396a, et seq.
[14] *Id.*
[15] 25 C.F.R. 211-12.
[16] "Indian Energy Development: Poor Management by BIA Has Hindered Energy Development on Indian Lands", U.S. Government Accountability Office, June 8, 2015, https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-15-502.pdf.
[17] *Id.*
[18] 25 U.S.C. § 2103.

Recent project experience illustrates both the utility and the limitations of the IMDA framework. Federal Register materials for the Absaloka mine on the Crow Reservation, for example, describe the project as proceeding pursuant to an IMDA agreement with the tribe, demonstrating how large-scale tribal mineral development can be structured outside of standard leasing. At the same time, the project required coordination across multiple federal and state permitting authorities and was analyzed through a comprehensive environmental review process. This underscores that even where the leasing mechanism is streamlined, the overall pathway remains multi-agency and sequential.[19]

Legislative efforts like H.R. 5910, Representative Harriet Hageman's (R-WY-At Large) 99-year leasing bill, which passed the House of Representatives on March 3, 2026, would bolster development by expanding tribes' ability to enter into long-term leases. This expansion would improve financing certainty and align project timelines with standard commercial practices.

III. Rights-of-Way and Access

Following lease approval, most projects require additional authorizations to secure physical access. ROWs across Indian lands are governed by 25 C.F.R. part 169, which DOI describes as intended to "streamline the procedures" for BIA approval of ROWs under 25 U.S.C. §§ 323–328.[20] In practice, these approvals are a necessary precursor to construction and, in many cases, to subsequent operational permits, including BLM drilling approvals.[21]

The mechanics of tribal consent are central to this stage and represent a distinct feature of development on tribal lands. On tribal land, applicants must obtain formal tribal consent, typically through a tribal authorization and, in some cases, a negotiated agreement. On individually owned Indian land, applicants must notify all interested parties and generally obtain written consent from the owners of a majority interest in each tract. Where ownership is highly fractionated, an "impracticable" pathway may be available for tracts with 50 or more co-owners, but only where specific statutory conditions are satisfied, including notice, opportunity to object, and findings regarding lack of substantial injury and adequate compensation.[22]

These requirements introduce additional procedures that do not apply to fee-land development. GAO has identified fractionation as a key constraint, noting that allotted parcels may have "hundreds or even thousands of owners," increasing the administrative burden associated with consent collection and documentation.[23] Even where 25 C.F.R. part 169 provides escalation mechanisms, such as allowing applicants to compel agency action when BIA fails to act, those mechanisms require additional notice, documentation, and process, extending timelines and

[19] 73 F.R. 15189.
[20] 25 C.F.R. 169, https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-25/chapter-I/subchapter-H/part-169/subpart-A.
[21] *Id.*
[22] 25 C.F.R. 169.107, https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-25/chapter-I/subchapter-H/part-169/subpart-C/subject-group-ECFRffdc30f5252571d/section-169.107.
[23] "Indian Energy Development: Poor Management by BIA Has Hindered Energy Development on Indian Lands", U.S. Government Accountability Office, June 8, 2015, https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-15-502.pdf.

reflecting a broader structural reality: the existing regulatory system anticipates delay and adds further steps to reach a decision.[24]

IV. Tribal Energy Resource Agreements

In addition to case-by-case federal approvals, Congress has authorized, under the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act of 2005,[25] an alternative pathway for tribal energy development.

A TERA is designed to function as an alternative to repeated Secretarial approvals. Once in effect, it allows a qualified tribe to enter into and manage energy-related leasing, business agreements, and ROWs on tribal lands without obtaining separate approval from the Secretary for each individual transaction.[26]

In practice, however, TERAs have not been widely adopted. Despite being authorized for more than two decades, a TERA had not been successfully implemented by a tribe until 2026.[27] GAO identified several barriers to uptake, including regulatory uncertainty, especially surrounding the scope of "inherently federal functions" that cannot be assumed by tribes, the cost and capacity requirements for tribes to assume federal responsibilities, and the complexity of the application and approval process.[28]

Congress established a statutory timeline under which a TERA should generally take effect: 271 days after submission, unless disapproved. [29] However, that timeline depends on DOI determining that an application is "complete," and tribes must first navigate a resource-intensive and technically demanding process to reach that stage.[30] As a result, the framework does not eliminate the front-end uncertainty associated with obtaining approval.

In January 2026, DOI received a final proposed TERA from the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and initiated a public comment period, triggering the statutory review timeline. [31] As of this writing, that proposal remains under review. This pending proposal represents the first real test of whether this framework can function as intended.

Contrasting TERA with the HEARTH Act is instructive. HEARTH applies primarily to surface leasing and allows tribes to approve leases under pre-approved tribal regulations without further

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[24] 25 C.F.R. 169.107.
[25] *See* P.L. 109-58.
[26] "Tribal Energy Resource Agreements and Tribal Energy Development Organizations", U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, https://www.bia.gov/service/tribal-energy-resource-agreements-development-organizations.
[27] "Tribal Energy Resource Agreements (TERAs): Approval Process and Selected Issues for Congress", Congressional Research Service, July 26, 2021, https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R46446; "Tribal Lands: Overview and Issues for Congress", Congressional Research Service, January 16, 2025, https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48360.
[28] "Indian Energy Development: Poor Management by BIA Has Hindered Energy Development on Indian Lands", U.S. Government Accountability Office, June 8, 2015, https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-15-502.pdf.
[29] 25 U.S.C § 3504(e)(2)(A)(i).
[30] 91 F.R. 8017.
[31] 91 F.R. 8017.

case-by-case Secretarial approval. This front-end delegation of authority has been widely adopted, with more than 70 tribes implementing HEARTH regulations.[32]

The limited adoption of TERAs underscores that although Congress has created tools to streamline federal involvement in tribal energy development, those tools have not yet displaced the underlying system of sequential federal approvals. As a result, most projects continue to proceed through the standard multi-agency pathway, and the underlying barriers to development remain largely unchanged.

V. NEPA and Consultation Sequencing

Environmental review under NEPA is a prerequisite for major federal actions[33] and the law's requirements generally must be satisfied before development can proceed.[34]

For development on tribal trust lands, BIA typically serves as the lead agency or central federal actor for NEPA purposes, particularly when it is the primary decision-maker on leasing or agreements. Other agencies, such as BLM or OSMRE, may participate as cooperating agencies or retain independent permitting authority, depending on the project. This structure requires coordination not only in analysis, but in the timing of decisions across agencies.[35]

In practice, NEPA-related delays are often driven less by the substance of the environmental review than by how agencies sequence and coordinate that review across multiple approvals. Multiple agencies may rely on the same baseline data but proceed on separate timelines or wait on one another's decisions. GAO has documented instances in which project documents remained under review for extended periods, including cases where materials sat within BIA for years. These delays increase costs, require updated analysis, and can ultimately prevent projects from moving forward.[36]

Chairman Bruce Westerman's SPEED Act targets these structural issues by clarifying NEPA's procedural scope, narrowing agency review to a consideration of only proximate effects, and reducing duplicative analysis. The legislation also allows agencies to rely on environmental reviews conducted pursuant to state or tribal laws, requires coordinated and concurrent agency reviews, establishes more defined timelines, and limits delays from late-arising information.

The SPEED Act also includes targeted provisions for tribal development. For projects affecting only tribal trust resources, it creates a presumption that the effects of the "no action" alternative are negative for the tribe[37] and limits administrative and judicial review unless brought by the affected tribe.[38] These provisions are intended to reduce outside interference, give greater weight to tribal decision-making over trust resources, and promote tribal sovereignty.

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[32] Approved HEARTH Act Regulations, Bureau of Indian Affairs, https://www.bia.gov/service/HEARTH-Act/approved-regulations.
[33] 42 U.S.C. § 4332(2)(C).
[34] 25 U.S.C. § 2103.
[35] *Id.*
[36] "Indian Energy Development: Poor Management by BIA Has Hindered Energy Development on Indian Lands", U.S. Government Accountability Office, June 8, 2015, https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-15-502.pdf.
[37] H.R. 4776, Sec. 2(e).
[38] H.R. 4776, Sec. 3(c)(3).

In a letter of support for the SPEED Act, the Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation expressed its frustration with the duplicative permitting process and the lack of control that tribes have over their own lands regarding development and NEPA compliance.[39] The Jicarilla Apache Nation has over 2,200 oil- and gas-producing wells that contribute significantly to the tribe's financial stability. As steward of its lands, the tribe expressed support for the SPEED Act to prevent interference from outside groups and to streamline the environmental review process to eliminate duplicative reviews. [40]

VI. Operational Permitting and Oversight

Federal involvement in tribal development does not end with lease approval. Even after securing a lease, projects must obtain additional federal approvals, creating further layers of review that can independently delay or halt development.

For oil and gas development, BLM retains responsibility for operational permitting and oversight. This includes the approval of Applications for Permit to Drill (APDs), as well as inspection, enforcement, and production-verification functions. These requirements apply to leases and permits approved under BIA's tribal leasing authorities, meaning that a project must satisfy an additional layer of federal review before development can proceed.[41]

BLM regulations specify that an APD is required to develop an onshore lease for federal or Indian oil and gas. Approval is contingent on compliance with NEPA and other applicable federal laws, including the National Historic Preservation Act and the Endangered Species Act. As a result, operational permitting is not a downstream formality but a gating step that depends on the completion of earlier environmental and consultation requirements.[42]

For coal development on Indian lands, the regulatory structure differs but is no less federalized. Under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, OSMRE authorizes surface coal mining and reclamation, including on certain reservations. This authority is implemented through 30 C.F.R. part 750 and extends throughout the life of the mining operation, not merely at the approval stage.[43]

In practice, this means that tribal resource projects remain subject to ongoing federal oversight, even after initial approvals are secured. BIA, BLM, OSMRE, and ONRR each retain distinct roles at different stages of development and production. Regulation of the Absaloka South Mine on the Crow Reservation in Montana illustrates this structure: while development proceeds pursuant to tribal agreements, OSMRE's Casper Field Office serves as the regulatory authority for mining and reclamation, demonstrating that the coal development pathway involves not only lease approval but a continuing federal regulatory regime.[44]

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[39] Letter of Support for the SPEED Act. Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation. On file with Committee Staff.
[40] Letter of Support for the SPEED Act. Jicarilla Apache Nation. On file with Committee Staff.
[41] 25 C.F.R. 211.4.
[42] *Id.*
[43] 25 C.F.R. 211.
[44] "Indian Lands Program: Regulation of Coal Mining and Reclamation Operations on Indian Lands", U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, https://www.osmre.gov/programs/regulating-active-coal-mines/indian-lands.

These layered operational requirements introduce additional procedural bottlenecks, particularly where permitting is contingent on completion of prior steps or coordination across agencies.

VII. Financing and Construction

As projects move toward construction, developers must align federal approvals with financing, procurement, and construction timelines. This includes coordinating capital raises, equipment acquisition, and workforce mobilization, as well as, for energy projects, securing interconnection agreements and meeting utility requirements. These timelines operate independently of federal review, meaning that approval delays can disrupt or invalidate underlying commercial arrangements. Certain tribes have freed themselves from at least some of these constraints by investing in tribally owned infrastructure. For example, Colusa Indian Energy operates a tribally owned cogeneration and microgrid system that supplies 100 percent of the electricity needed for tribal facilities.[45]

For tribes operating wholly within the federal context, however, the cumulative effect of earlier stages becomes most consequential. GAO has documented that delays in federal review, particularly at the leasing stage, can directly affect project viability. In one instance, an 18-month delay in lease approval caused a tribe to lose an interconnection agreement, preventing the project from moving forward and resulting in lost revenue.[46] GAO has also reported multi-year review periods associated with tens of millions of dollars in estimated lost revenues, as well as cases in which delays rendered project data outdated, requiring additional analysis and further extended timelines.[47]

These risks are compounded by structural financing constraints. Limited access to capital and barriers to fully utilizing federal tax incentives increase the cost of delay for tribal projects relative to non-tribal development.[48] Where projects depend on tightly sequenced financing and infrastructure commitments, the inability to predict federal timelines can deter investment or prevent projects from reaching financial closure.

VIII. Royalties and Revenue Flow

Only after a project reaches production does the focus shift to revenue collection, reporting, and disbursement. Even at this stage, multiple federal entities retain ongoing roles.

BLM is responsible for inspection and production verification. ONRR collects and audits royalties, and the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration, in coordination with BIA, handles disbursements to tribes and individual Indian mineral owners.[49] Although these processes operate

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[45] "Colusa Indian Community Council—2022 Project", U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Indian Energy, https://www.energy.gov/indianenergy/colusa-indian-community-council-2022-project.
[46] "Indian Energy Development: Poor Management by BIA Has Hindered Energy Development on Indian Lands", U.S. Government Accountability Office, June 8, 2015, https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-15-502.pdf.
[47] *Id.*
[48] *Id.*
[49] "Office of Natural Resources Revenue Indian Outreach: Frequently Asked Questions From Indian Mineral Owners", U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Natural Resources Revenue, December 2024, https://onrr.gov/document/BlueBookFAQ.pdf.

on defined timelines, they depend on accurate reporting from payors, meaning delays or errors can postpone payments and reinforce the broader pattern of federal processes shaping outcomes.[50]

Where development does occur, the revenue impact is significant.[51] In Fiscal Year 2025, DOI reported approximately $14.61 billion in total energy revenue disbursements, including roughly $1.00 billion to tribes and individual Indian mineral owners.[52]

IX. Looking Forward

Greater tribal natural resource development presents a clear opportunity for tribes and for the country at large. Where development proceeds, it supports tribal self-determination, strengthens local economies, and contributes to domestic energy and mineral production.

The Trump administration has taken important steps to prioritize domestic energy production by improving permitting coordination and reducing regulatory burdens.[53] Congress has pursued legislative fixes, such as Chairman Westerman's SPEED Act, which targets duplicative review and limits litigation-driven delays. Despite these positive initiatives, the federal approval process remains fragmented and difficult to navigate.

Unlocking the full potential of tribal natural resources will require continued efforts to streamline federal processes, improve accountability, and ensure that tribes are able to develop their resources without unnecessary federal interference. Doing so will not only advance tribal economic self-determination but also strengthen American energy independence and national security.

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[50] *Id.*

[51] "Disbursements: How it works", U.S. Department of the Interior Natural Resources Revenue Data, https://doi-extractives-data.app.cloud.gov/how-it-works/disbursements/.

[52] "Interior Announces $14.61 Billion in Fiscal Year 2025 Energy Revenue", U.S. Department of the Interior, November 24, 2025, https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/interior-announces-1461-billion-fiscal-year-2025-energy-revenue.

[53] *See, e.g.*, White House, Executive Order, "Unleashing American Energy", January 20, 2025, https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/unleashing-american-energy/; White House, Executive Order, "Declaring A National Energy Emergency", January 20, 2025, https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/declaring-a-national-energy-emergency/; White House, Executive Order, "Establishing the National Energy Dominance Council", February 14, 2025, https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/establishing-the-national-energy-dominance-council/; White House, Executive Order, "Immediate Measures to Increase American Mineral Production", March 20, 2025, https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/immediate-measures-to-increase-american-mineral-production/; White House, Executive Order, "Reinvigorating America's Beautiful Clean Coal Industry and Amending Executive Order 14241", April 8, 2025, https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/reinvigorating-americas-beautiful-clean-coal-industry-and-amending-executive-order-14241/.