

House Committee on Natural Resources

Tribal Natural Resource Development: Barriers and Successes

April 22, 2026

Witnesses:

- [Talia Martin, Co-executive director of Tribal Energy Alternatives](#)
- [Ken Ahmann, COO of Colusa Indian Energy](#)
- [Andrew Gallegos, Councilman for the Southern Ute Indian Tribe](#)
- [Frank White Clay, Chairman of the Crow Tribe of Indians](#)

Highlights:

The subcommittee examined how extensive federal permitting requirements—particularly NEPA review and multi-agency approvals—delay or prevent Tribal nations from developing energy and natural resources on trust lands, undermining Tribal sovereignty and economic self-determination. Witnesses from Tribal governments and organizations emphasized that streamlining these processes would allow Tribes to pursue energy development—both conventional and renewable—on their own terms while still protecting their lands and communities.

Key points:

- Federal permitting delays limit Tribal self-determination
 - Witnesses repeatedly cited overlapping approvals (BIA, NEPA, EPA, DOI) as the primary barrier to Tribal energy and mineral development. Developing projects on Tribal lands can require dozens of federal steps, compared to only a handful on private lands. Lengthy timelines cause Tribes to lose financing, infrastructure access, and economic opportunities.
- Economic impacts are immediate and severe
 - The Crow Nation testified that regulatory pressure and permitting delays contributed to the closure of a major coal mine, resulting in hundreds of lost jobs, sharp revenue losses, and reduced funding for public safety, education, and social services.
 - Witnesses linked stalled development to increased poverty, outmigration, and community vulnerability.
- Tribal authority tools exist but are underutilized
 - Tribes described gradual progress under laws like the [HEARTH Act](#) and [Tribal Energy Resource Agreements \(TERAs\)](#), which allow Tribes to assume greater control over leasing and energy decisions.

- The Southern Ute Tribe is expected to become the first Tribe to implement a TERA, but witnesses said the approval process itself is slow and complex, limiting broader adoption.
- [National Environmental Policy Act \(NEPA\)](#) application on Tribal lands
 - Tribes support environmental review but argued that applying federal NEPA processes to Tribally approved projects allows outside parties with no connection to the land to delay or block development.
 - Witnesses argued this undermines Tribal sovereignty and prevents Tribes from managing their lands under their own standards.
- Renewable and diversified energy development matters
 - Testimony highlighted successful Tribal projects in solar, microgrids, battery storage, and workforce development that reduce energy costs, improve reliability, and build local capacity.
 - Witnesses raised concerns that recent cuts to federal clean energy and Tribal resilience programs have stalled projects and reduced projected household savings.
- Legislative proposals under discussion
 - Several witnesses expressed support for provisions in the [SPEED Act](#), which aims to streamline federal permitting, limit duplicative reviews, and provide greater certainty for Tribal projects.
 - Members from both parties acknowledged the system is not working for Tribes, while debating safeguards related to environmental and judicial review.