Dear Landowners,

The United States Department of Energy (DOE) is considering constructing three National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors (NIETC), including the Southwestern Grid Connector Corridor, which is currently proposed to span the entire length of eastern New Mexico and into eastern Colorado. The NIETC could threaten your local government’s siting authority and impact your private property rights.

DOE is in Phase 3 of this project, which is focused on public engagement while refining the scope and geographic boundaries of the NIETC. In the next phase—Phase 4—the final NIETC routes will be designated. DOE is currently seeking public comment on this proposed project. Specifically:

DOE invites suggestions on environmental, cultural, or socioeconomic considerations or potential effects that DOE should consider during its review and analysis of its potential NIETC designations, including comments on whether any potential effects can be meaningfully evaluated. DOE additionally seeks input on whether each potential NIETC maximizes existing rights-of-way and avoids and minimizes, to the maximum extent practicable, and offsets to the extent appropriate and practicable, sensitive environmental areas and cultural heritage sites (FPA section 216(a)(4)(G)).

We encourage all private landowners to submit a public comment urging the DOE to conduct a full analysis of the effects this project may have on your operation and community. The attached document outlines potential topics you can discuss in your comment, encouraging DOE to assess and limit any of the NIETC’s negative impacts on New Mexico landowners and communities.

**Comments are due February 14, 2025**. You may submit your comment using one of the following methods:

**Online**: Submit your comment here: <https://www.regulations.gov/docket/DOE-HQ-2024-0089> (Docket Number DOE–HQ–2024–0089—Potential Designation of the Southwestern Grid Connector National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor)

**Email**: Send to NIETC@hq.doe.gov with the subject line “DOE–HQ–2024–0089—Potential Designation of the Southwestern Grid Connector National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor”

**Mail**: U.S. Department of Energy, Grid Deployment Office, 1000 Independence Ave. SW, Suite 4H–065, Washington, DC 20585 (must be post marked on or before February 14, 2025)

If you would like to read more information about the NIETC, you can visit the following websites:

* **DOE NIETC Web Page**: <https://www.energy.gov/gdo/national-interest-electric-transmission-corridor-designation-process>
* **Federal Register**: <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2024-29419>
* **DOE Guidance on Implementing the Statute to Designate NIETCs**: <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/2023-12-15%20GDO%20NIETC%20Final%20Guidance%20Document.pdf>

Thank you for helping us protect our local governments from federal encroachment and, more importantly, safeguarding your private property rights.

*Note*: Any personally identifiable information included in your comment form or attachment (such as your address) may be publicly disclosed.

Re: Docket No. DOE–HQ–2024–0089—Potential Designation of the Southwestern Grid Connector National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor

 The proposed Southwestern Grid Connector Corridor constitutes a “major federal action” requiring DOE to conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The project will significantly impact environmental, cultural and socioeconomic values in my community and on my [ranch/farm/dairy/land/business]. A thorough and complete analysis through an EIS is necessary to ensure all impacts are properly evaluated.

[*NEPA is an environmental law that requires the federal government to analyze the environmental effects of proposed projects. Before DOE can construct on one of the NIETCs, it must complete some level of environmental review. NEPA provides three levels of review:*

1. Categorical Exclusion: *Used if the proposed action will have no “significant effect on the human environment,” allowing the agency to forgo a detailed analysis (easiest for the agency)*
2. Environmental Assessment (EA): *Used when the action may have minor environmental impacts, requiring only a brief analysis of such effects*
3. Environmental Impact Statement (EIS): *Used when the project constitutes a “major” federal action “significantly affecting the quality of the human environment;” an EIS is a detailed and comprehensive report that evaluates environmental impacts, considers alternative options, and addresses other relevant factors (most challenging level of review for the agency)*

*We want to illustrate that the NIETC qualifies as a major action that will significantly impact the human environment, so that DOE will need to conduct the most thorough level of analysis.*]

 I am a [rancher/farmer/dairyman/landowner/businessowner] in [County Name] County, New Mexico. The proposed Southwestern Grid Connector Corridor route traverses [my land/community/county]. This project will directly impact my operation by [summarize effects].

[*The routes are not set in stone and will likely be amended. Even if the project does not look like it will cross your property as the route is currently drafted, it is important to describe the impacts that it would have on your operation in the case the route changes. This is a good opportunity to provide input on the route.*]

 As a New Mexico [rancher/farmer/dairyman/landowner/businessowner], I offer the following comments for consideration in developing the Southwestern NIETC corridor:

[*The following bullet points are merely ideas on what topics you may want to consider. Customize the list based on the effects you anticipate in your community and operation. Be as detailed as possible. We need to show that these effects are reasonably likely to occur and create measurable damages.*]

**Environmental Effects**

* Reduced land availability for grazing or planting, especially during the construction phase, with ongoing maintenance impacts into the operation phase too
* Increased need for access roads
* Impacts on endangered species and critical habitat
	+ *Example: My ranch is located near lesser prairie chicken habitat. A transmission corridor would further endanger lesser prairie chickens and make it harder for my operation to comply with the already challenging endangered species regulations. If my own ability to develop and operate on my land is limited due to lesser prairie chickens, DOE should be subject to the same limitations and held to the same standards.*
* Increased exposure to radiation from EMF (electromagnetic field) frequencies
* Harm to wildlife and wildlife habitats
* Disruption to bird and butterfly migration routes
* Soil disturbance and erosion

**Cultural Effects**

* Harm to state and/or national landmarks (Santa Fe Trail, Route 66, etc.)
* Disturbance to archaeological or historical sites
* Degradation of scenic value and local aesthetics
* Noise pollution from the buzzing sound
* Encroaches on local authority (siting, permits, limits county’s ability to set reclamation, decommissioning, height limitations, setback requirements, etc.)
* Changes the community’s character

**Socioeconomic Effects**

* Decreased land values
* Reduced marketability of property and fewer interested buyers
* Clouds property title (future sales are much more challenging when the land is subject to potential condemnation)
* Difficult to plant and conduct other agricultural operations around a transmission line
* Reduced grazing capacity
* Negative impact on hunting and ability generate income from selling tags
* Increased liability risks (fire dangers, stray voltage, etc.)
* Challenges in securing loans (by affecting mortgage agreements and diminished property values)
* Interference with existing easements
* Increased susceptibility to future condemnation for additional infrastructure and electric projects
* Economic shifts due to federal policy changes, such as President Trump’s moratorium on federal wind leasing in parts of the United States and the review of existing wind projects, which may reduce the need for the NIETC

For these reasons, there is no doubt that this project constitutes a major federal action that will significantly impact the environment, community, and economy in my community. Additionally, my local government better understands the specific needs of my community. DOE should respect our local communities and refrain from threatening my local government’s siting and decision-making authority. [Additional conclusions you would like to add].

I urge DOE to conduct a full EIS and coordinate with New Mexico [ranchers/ farmers/ dairyman/ landowners/businessman], my local government in [County Name] County, and [Organizations or other people who represent your interests] throughout the remainder of the Southwestern Grid Connector Corridor project.

Sincerely,

[Your name]