



R-CALF USA

PO Box 30715

Billings, MT 59107

Phone: 406-252-2516

Fax: 406-252-3176

Email: r-calfusa@r-calfusa.com

www.r-calfusa.com

June 24, 2024

U.S. Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20460

Sent via e-mail: NIETC@hq.doe.gov

Re: **R-CALF USA's Comments to U.S. Department of Energy: National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor (NIETC).**

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Ranchers Cattlemen Action Legal Fund United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF USA) appreciates this opportunity to comment to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) regarding the National Interest Electronic Transmission Corridor (NIETC).

R-CALF USA is the largest trade association that exclusively represents United States cattle farmers and ranchers within the multi-segmented beef supply chain. Its thousands of members reside in 44 states and include cow-calf operators, cattle backgrounders and stockers, and feedlot owners. R-CALF USA also represents U.S. sheep producers.

R-CALF USA just held its 25th annual convention in South Dakota (June 19-21) with about 500 attending cattle and sheep producers from around the nation, including many from the NIETC's designated Northern Plains, Mountain-Plains-Southwest, and Plains Southwest regions. Also in attendance were producers from the Mountain Northwest and Mid-Atlantic regions. Had it not been for a single attending individual who shared information about the NIETC's comment period, neither R-CALF USA nor hundreds of its attending members would have known about NIETC's plan.

Historically, federal agencies would attempt to contact organizations known to represent business operations likely to be impacted by government proposals such as this to ensure that most if not all affected businesses would be aware of the proposal and be afforded an opportunity to comment. R-CALF USA is unaware of any such important outreach by the NIETC. Therefore, we ask that the comment period be extended for an additional 60 days so we can inform our cattle and sheep business operators of the DOE's plans and their right to submit comments.

The U.S. cattle industry is the largest segment of American agriculture and the continuing profitability of our nation's cattle producers is vital to the economic wellbeing of rural communities along the various corridors included on the map available at [National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor Designation Process | Department of Energy](#). Attached please find a map by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, showing that the various corridors proposed by the NIETC are located in regions where cattle and sheep production are particularly concentrated. A similar map is also attached showing the locations of America's lamb producers.

To the extent that the corridor designations will disrupt perhaps thousands of independent cattle and sheep businesses or result in the confiscation of essential grazing and haying lands, the NIETC bears the potential to jeopardize America's national food security interests. This is because disruption or loss of land use could render hundreds or thousands of independent cattle and sheep businesses unprofitable, which would lead to further concentration within the two industries and make both beef and lamb production inherently vulnerable to shocks such as a disease pandemic. This is no longer speculation as many Americans already found their grocery shelves empty of beef during the 2020 COVID pandemic.

Data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Census reveal that America is losing both cattle and sheep operations at alarming rates. The cattle industry has lost over 655,000 beef cattle operations during just the past four decades. R-CALF USA is concerned the NIETC proposal will accelerate this ongoing loss and put America's food production system in peril.

We urge the NIETC to extend the deadline for comment as well as to provide alternatives to its plan to locate transmission lines in regions vital to beef and lamb production in the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Bullard", written in a cursive style.

Bill Bullard, CEO

Attachments: 2