



# Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council Annual Report to Congress



Fiscal Year 2024



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## Acknowledgements

The Acting Executive Director of the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council (Permitting Council) prepared this report pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 4370m-7(a)(1)(A), with review by the Permitting Council Members, and opportunity to include comments concerning the performance of their agency, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 4370m-7(a)(1)(B).

The Permitting Council is a federal agency charged with making the federal permitting process more efficient by improving the accountability, transparency and predictability of the federal environmental review and authorization process for certain critical infrastructure projects. The Permitting Council comprises the Executive Director, who serves as the Permitting Council Chair, and 15 other members, including the Deputy Secretary (or equivalent) from 13 federal agencies, the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

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## Report Summary & Highlights

Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 4370m-7(a)(1), as amended, this Annual Report to Congress details the progress of the Permitting Council in implementing Title 41 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST-41) during Fiscal Year (FY) 2024. This report includes an introduction to FAST-41 and the Permitting Council; a description of the FAST-41 covered project portfolio; and an evaluation of progress made in implementing FAST-41 during FY 2024. The report, which has been reviewed by the Permitting Council pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 4370m-7(a)(1)(B),<sup>1</sup> is submitted to Congress by the Permitting Council Acting Executive Director (Executive Director) and published on the [Permitting Council website](#).

FAST-41 requires the Executive Director to submit to Congress, on a quarterly basis, a separate report evaluating agency compliance with the provisions of FAST-41, including a description of the implementation and adherence of each agency to the Coordinated Project Plan (CPP) and permitting timetable requirements.<sup>2</sup> These Quarterly Agency Performance Reports, which the Executive Director submits under separate cover, can be found [here](#).

This Annual Report was developed by compiling data from the Permitting Dashboard and Quarterly Agency Performance Reports, through discussions with Permitting Council staff, and in consultation with Permitting Council agencies. The Permitting Council staff requested that agencies share accomplishments from FY 2024 that highlight FAST-41 implementation successes and examples that advance the state of practice for permitting across the Federal Government. This input is reflected throughout the report.

Previous reports to Congress for FY 2016-2023 can be found [here](#).

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<sup>1</sup> For agencies that do not yet have confirmed Permitting Council Members, agency Chief Environmental Review and Permitting Officers (CERPOs) and staff reviewed this report.

<sup>2</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 4370m-7(a)(2).

## Highlights from the report include:

- An overview of the 33 covered FAST-41 projects in FY 2024:
  - Eight different sectors active in FY 2024
  - Five projects that initiated the FAST-41 process in FY 2024
  - Seven projects that completed all federal environmental reviews and authorizations in FY 2024
- An update on assistance provided through the Environmental Review Improvement Fund (ERIF) Assistance Program to improve permit processing times, including:
  - Initiatives at agencies represented on the Permitting Council creating permitting process efficiencies and integrating FAST-41 into agency processes
  - Information technology (IT) investments that contribute to timely infrastructure review processes
- Initiatives to clarify the FAST-41 process, including issuance of updated FAST-41 Implementation Guidance
- Outreach and communication with Permitting Council stakeholders to increase awareness of FAST-41 as a tool that provides transparent and predictable permitting timelines, such as:
  - Planning the Infrastructure Developers Summit, held in October 2024, to bring together over 200 stakeholders to discuss opportunities to improve federal permitting
  - Dozens of industry engagements to share the Permitting Council's mission and reach new potential project sponsors
  - Congressional outreach, including visits to FAST-41 project sites with Senate staff
- New data metrics including: For the seven FAST-41 covered projects that completed records of decision (RODs) in FY 2024, the average environmental impact statement (EIS) timeline (measured from notice of intent (NOI) to ROD) was 2.8 years, 23 percent faster than the 3.6-year average EIS timeline derived from [government-wide data](#) for all EISs completed in FY 2024<sup>3</sup>

3 For the five FAST-41 covered projects that completed final EISs (FEISs) in FY 2024, the average EIS timeline (measured from NOI to FEIS) was 2.7 years, 25 percent faster than the 3.7-year average EIS timeline derived from government-wide data for all FEISs completed in FY 2024.

# About FAST-41 and the Permitting Council

Established in 2015 pursuant to FAST-41, 42 U.S.C. 4370m et seq., the Permitting Council helps facilitate predictable, transparent and accountable federal environmental reviews and authorizations<sup>4</sup> for infrastructure projects covered by FAST-41 (i.e., “covered projects”).<sup>5</sup> The Permitting Council also develops best practices for improving environmental review and authorizations and works closely with Federal Government agencies and stakeholders to identify and resolve the permitting roadblocks that can slow down the buildout of critical infrastructure.

## FAST-41 coverage provides agencies, Congress, project sponsors and the public with the following benefits:

- **Transparency:** The centerpiece of FAST-41 is the Federal Permitting Dashboard, where federal agencies must publicly post and actively manage the comprehensive, integrated permitting timetable required for each FAST-41 covered project. These publicly posted timetables give a real-time accounting of the progress on each required review and authorization for the project, providing transparency for all stakeholders, from project sponsors to affected community members.
- **Predictability:** Foundational tools like the permitting timetable and CPP bring a level of predictability to FAST-41 covered projects. The structure ensures close coordination with the project sponsors and cooperating agencies in the management of covered projects and helps project sponsors make plans and commit resources more reliably. Features such as dispute resolution procedures and Executive Director review and approval of significant permitting timetable modifications help avoid unexpected delay. Congress made the Permitting Council agency permanent in 2021. In FY 2024 the Executive Director had a staff of 19 federal employees that supported the work of the Executive Director in implementing FAST-41.
- **Accountability:** FAST-41 brings a level of accountability to federal permitting that is often missing from the traditional process. The program’s specific tracking and reporting requirements and restrictions on modifications of permitting timetables and delays help to hold federal agencies accountable for schedule implementation and help ensure deliberate and timely decision making.

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<sup>4</sup> The term “environmental review” is defined in the statute as, “the agency procedures and processes for applying a categorical exclusion or for preparing an environmental assessment, an environmental impact statement, or other document required under the National Environmental Policy Act.” 42 U.S.C. § 4370m(11). The term “authorization” means “any license, permit, approval, finding, determination, or other administrative decision issued by an agency and any inter-agency consultation that is required or authorized under Federal law in order to site, construct, reconstruct, or commence operations of a covered project administered by a Federal agency or, in the case of a State that chooses to participate in the environmental review and authorization process in accordance with 42 U.S.C. § 4370m–2(c)(3)(A), a State agency.” 42 U.S.C. § 4370m(3).

<sup>5</sup> The full definition of “covered project,” which includes criteria that projects must meet to qualify for coverage under the FAST-41 program, is found in 42 U.S.C. § 4370m(6).

Congress made the Permitting Council agency permanent in 2021. In FY 2024 the Executive Director had a staff of 19 federal employees that supported the work of the Executive Director in implementing FAST-41.

FAST-41 is a voluntary program for qualifying infrastructure projects; project sponsors must apply for and obtain FAST-41 coverage for their projects.<sup>6</sup> Covered projects may include infrastructure projects across the following industry sectors: renewable and conventional energy production, electricity transmission, surface transportation, aviation, ports and waterways, water resource projects, broadband, pipelines, manufacturing, semiconductors, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, high-performance computing and advanced computer hardware and software, quantum information science and technology, data storage and data management, cybersecurity, carbon capture, energy storage, and mining. The Permitting Council may, by majority vote, engage in a federal rulemaking to add FAST-41 sectors.

FAST-41 does not dictate particular project-related outcomes or affect the level of environmental review a project receives.<sup>7</sup> The statute instead requires transparency and deliberate coordination of federal effort in making environmental review and permitting decisions. FAST-41 coverage expressly does not alter or supersede any applicable statutory or regulatory requirement, environmental law, regulation, required review process, or public involvement procedure. FAST-41 coverage does not predetermine the outcome of any federal decision-making process with respect to any covered project, or mandate completion of FAST-41 covered project reviews before reviews of other projects.

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6 See 42 U.S.C. §§ 4370m-2(a)(1), (b)(2)(A)(ii).

7 See 42 U.S.C. §§ 4370m-6(d) & (e).



*SunZia Southwest Transmission Project*

FAST-41 provides transparency into the federal permitting process through management of a comprehensive, integrated federal permitting timetable for each FAST-41 covered project, which is on the public-facing [Permitting Dashboard](#), and accounts for, organizes, and coordinates all necessary federal environmental reviews and authorizations for a covered project. Managing a permitting timetable in compliance with FAST-41 requires close communication among the participating federal agencies and between the federal agencies and project sponsors. In circumstances where a state chooses to participate in the federal environmental review and decision-making process, this would also require close coordination among the federal agencies and participating state agencies. FAST-41 encourages business practice improvements in the environmental review and decision-making process for covered infrastructure projects, facilitating the development of critical infrastructure investments.



The Permitting Council works closely with the permitting agencies and developers to identify emerging issues, facilitate solutions, and maintain progress towards permitting deadlines.

The Federal Government continues to support significant new investments into our Nation's infrastructure, requiring the allocation of substantial resources toward federal permitting. To this end, FAST-41 established the ERIF to make funds available to the Executive Director to implement FAST-41 and support the role of the Permitting Council as a federal center for permitting excellence. FAST-41 also authorizes the Executive Director to transfer funds from the ERIF to other federal agencies and state, Tribal and local governments, to facilitate timely and efficient environmental reviews and authorizations for FAST-41 projects.<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, the Executive Director creates performance schedules for FAST-41 sectors for agencies to use as baselines for developing their FAST-41 covered project permitting timetables, and the Permitting Council establishes recommendations for best practices for agencies to implement when undertaking environmental reviews and authorizations for FAST-41 covered infrastructure projects. The Permitting Council serves as a federal center for permitting excellence by supporting training for permitting professionals, identifying and promoting permitting best practices, supporting interagency detailee and rotation opportunities, and providing a forum for sharing information and lessons learned. The Permitting Council fosters intergovernmental cooperation as well as cooperation with industries and communities to develop more efficient, transparent and effective processes for reviewing and permitting infrastructure.

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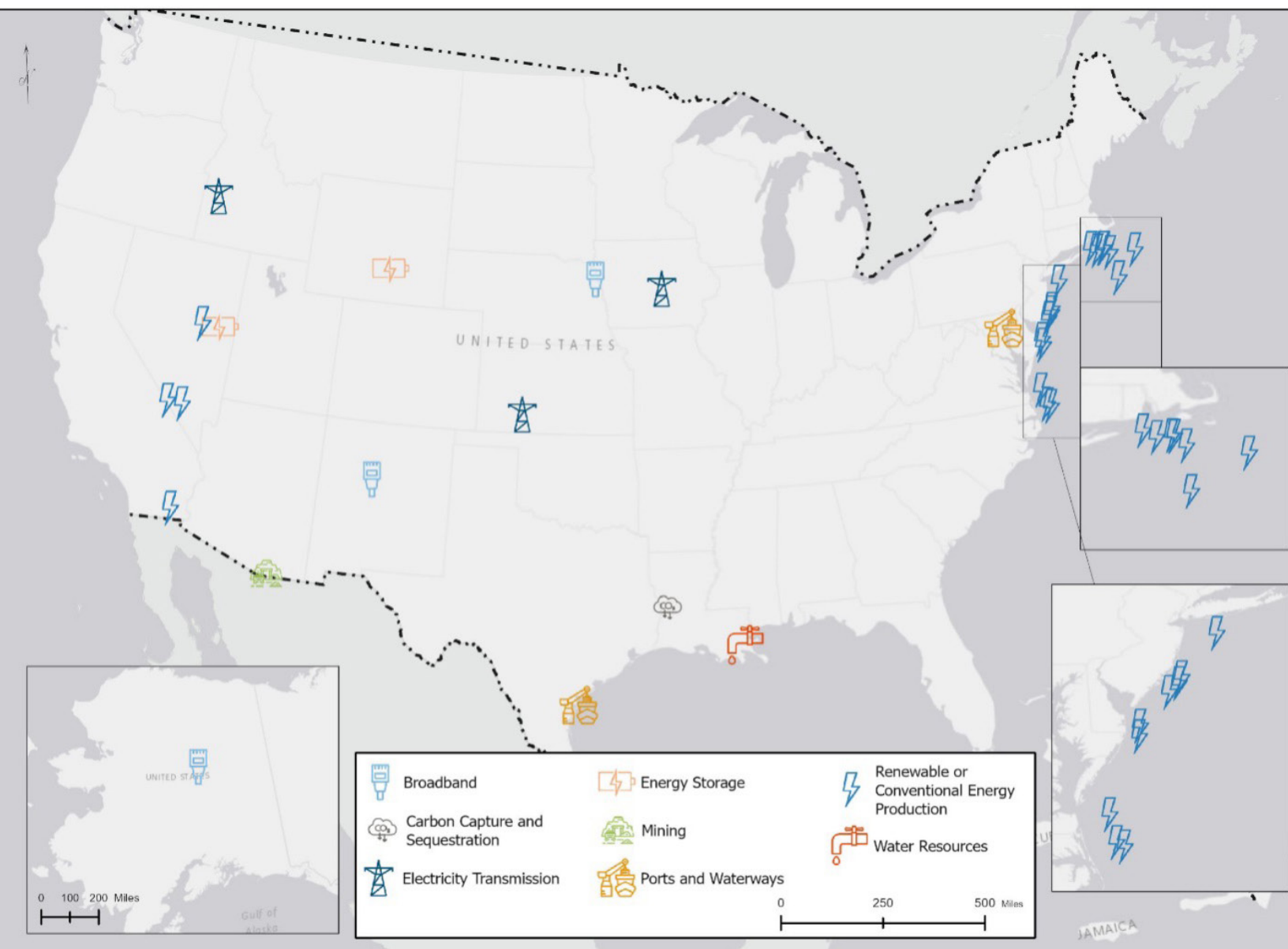
<sup>8</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 4370m-8(d).

# Description of Project Portfolio

The Permitting Council maintains a portfolio of infrastructure projects that have obtained coverage under FAST-41. This section describes active (planned and in progress), newly covered, completed, paused, and canceled projects in the FAST-41 covered project portfolio during FY 2024.

## Active Projects

Projects undergoing active review are projects that were planned or in progress at any time in FY 2024. There were 33 active FAST-41 covered projects in FY 2024. Figure 1 shows the location of FAST-41 covered projects undergoing active federal review at some point in FY 2024.



**Figure 1:** Covered projects undergoing active federal review at some point in FY 2024

For the 33 FAST-41 covered projects undergoing active federal review at some point during FY 2024, Figure 2 summarizes the status as of September 30, 2024 (the end of FY 2024).



**Figure 2:** The status of each project in the Permitting Council portfolio as of the end of FY 2024

## Completed Projects

In FY 2024 the Permitting Council saw the completion of seven FAST-41 covered projects in the electricity transmission, ports and waterways, and renewable or conventional energy production sectors:

- [Cardinal-Hickory Creek 345 kV Transmission Line](#) Project (Iowa and Wisconsin)
- [Port of Corpus Christi Authority Channel Deepening Project](#) (Texas)
- [Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind Commercial Project](#) (Virginia)
- [Revolution Wind Farm Project](#) (Rhode Island and Connecticut)
- [Empire Wind Energy Project](#) (New York)
- [Sunrise Wind Farm](#) (New York)
- [New England Wind](#) (Massachusetts)

## Completed Project Highlights

The Cardinal-Hickory Creek 345 kV Transmission Line Project runs 102 miles between Iowa and Wisconsin. The project provides economic savings and improves electric system reliability for affected communities.

The Port of Corpus Christi Authority Channel Deepening Project will expand one of the largest ports in the Nation, a major gateway to international and domestic maritime commerce, by deepening and extending the channel with the capacity to accommodate transit of very large crude carriers into Corpus Christi, Texas.

## Newly Covered Projects

Project sponsors initiated FAST-41 for five new projects from across the country in FY 2024. The newly added projects, in the order that the Permitting Council received a FAST-41 Initiation Notice (FIN) from project sponsors are:

- [Vineyard Northeast](#) (Massachusetts)
- [Grain Belt Express Transmission - Phase 1](#) (Kansas and Missouri)
- [Silver Star Solar](#) (Nevada)
- [Winnebago Tribe Broadband Connectivity Project](#) (Nebraska)
- [Perkins Renewable Energy Project](#) (California)

The addition of these new projects signals an increasing awareness of the value of participating in the FAST-41 program, including the benefits of transparency, predictability and accountability in the federal process that come from collaboratively developing and actively managing public-facing project permitting timetables. The projects represent three different sectors across six states, demonstrating the value and benefits of the FAST-41 process, regardless of project type or geographic location.

## Paused Projects

Under certain circumstances, a facilitating or lead agency may request that the Executive Director “pause” the FAST-41 process for a covered project. The permitting timetable for the [Liberty Development and Production Plan Project](#) was paused prior to FY 2024 and remained paused for the duration of FY 2024. [Beacon Wind](#) and [Ocean Wind 1](#) were paused in FY 2024. Details regarding these paused projects may be found on each project’s page on the Permitting Dashboard.

## Canceled Projects

Canceled projects are those for which the environmental review and authorization process will not be completed. A cancellation may occur for a variety of reasons (e.g., a project sponsor could withdraw its application from federal review, or the lead agency could make a determination that the federal environmental review and authorization for the covered project will not move forward). The permitting timetable for the [Plains Pipeline, L.P. Lines 901 and 903 Replacement Project](#) was paused starting in FY 2022 and canceled in FY 2024. FAST-41 coverage for the [Central Louisiana Regional Carbon Storage Hub - Vernon Parish One CCS Site](#) project was canceled during FY 2024. Details regarding these canceled projects may be found on each project’s page on the Permitting Dashboard.

# Highlights of Progress Made Implementing FAST-41

The Permitting Council and the agencies represented on the Permitting Council have made significant progress advancing transparency, predictability and accountability in the environmental review and authorization process in FY 2024.

## Permitting Council Efforts

The Permitting Council has the authority and expertise to help agencies move complex infrastructure projects through the environmental review and authorization process and ultimately enable infrastructure to be built. The Permitting Council, the Executive Director, and Permitting Council staff assist with problem solving, facilitating resources that provide technical expertise to help agencies and project sponsors manage the permitting and environmental review process. In FY 2024, federal agencies made significant progress in implementing FAST-41, advancing permitting, and providing technical assistance to ensure timely and efficient environmental reviews.



*Gemini Solar Project site visit in July 2024*

## Agency Implementation Highlight

The South32 Hermosa Critical Minerals project is the Nation's first and only critical minerals FAST-41 project. Located in the Patagonia Mountains of Arizona, the mine contains one of the largest undeveloped zinc resources in the world and has proven potential to produce battery-grade manganese. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is serving as lead agency, and due to **robust engagement** between the project team, proponent, federal partners, and the public, the project is on track for timely completion. Frequent communication has driven project success and ensures that issues are identified and elevated before they become roadblocks. This proactive collaboration is key to overcoming complex public and environmental concerns and interagency coordination challenges.

USDA, federal partners, and the project sponsor work in close coordination with the public, state and local communities, and Tribal Nations to swiftly identify and address challenges, and to date, **all permitting milestones have been met on or ahead of schedule**. This outcome highlights the power of **strong stakeholder engagement** — a best practice that streamlines complex reviews, enhances predictability, and keeps projects moving forward.

## ERIF Assistance Program

The ERIF Assistance Program facilitates permitting improvement activities, including specifically:

- Facilitating timely and efficient environmental reviews and authorizations for covered projects and other projects under FAST-41 through transfers to federal, state, Tribal and local governments; and
- Supporting the role of the Permitting Council as a federal center for permitting excellence.

Agencies have made significant accomplishments using ERIF Assistance Program funds during this FY:

- ***Creating Permitting Process Efficiencies:*** To digitize and modernize the permitting process, many agencies are leveraging ERIF Assistance Program funds to save costs and gain efficiencies in the timeliness of environmental review and authorizations. The U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) developed a list of national, state and local permitting requirements for five geographic regions. This list enables semiconductor project developers to quickly identify the requirements in these areas resulting in more efficient communication and fewer iterations between NIST and developers. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) developed logically structured sets of questions, known as “determination keys,” to assist project proponents with determining whether a proposed project may affect federally listed wildlife, critical habitats, and other federal trust wildlife resources. These determination keys identify conservation measures that can be incorporated into the project design and operations to avoid or minimize adverse effects and streamline the Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation process. Working with the U.S. National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to pilot this consultation approach, these determination keys have resulted in 75 percent of the broadband projects completing Section 7 consultation in a few hours instead of weeks.
- ***Integrating FAST-41 into Agency Processes:*** Agencies used funds to integrate FAST-41 processes into agency procedures to enable consistent and effective application of environmental reviews. NTIA launched the Permitting and Environmental Information Application and training video, a publicly available tool that enables the user to identify federal and state permit requirements, identify rights of way and Tribal lands, and screen for environmentally sensitive resources. This tool improves transparency, a central tenet of FAST-41.

## Agency Implementation Highlight

The ERIF Assistance Program was instrumental to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) progress in FY 2024 on developing environmental review and permitting resources to ensure DHS and its Components are a consistent and efficient partner in the environmental review and permitting space. DHS accomplishments made using ERIF assistance include: an evaluation of DHS systems to better track and collect data regarding permitting and infrastructure projects; development of a webpage to inform stakeholders and the public on DHS’s involvement with environmental review and permitting; and development of Department-wide guidance, fact sheets, and trainings on DHS equities and associated environmental review and permitting procedures. DHS also benefited from the support of a permitting subject matter expert who was key in ensuring that environmental permitting and authorization reviews are being integrated as appropriate in numerous DHS policy and guidance development efforts.

- **Advancing Best Practices:** Agencies developed effective permitting solutions and shared them across agencies, leading to greater adoption of best practices designed to streamline the environmental review and authorization process. DHS and USDA leveraged ERIF Assistance to enable the adoption of categorical exclusions from other agencies. For DHS, this will streamline reviews for disaster recovery and resiliency projects. For USDA, this will streamline reviews for road expansions, powerline upgrades and additions, pipeline replacement and repair, broadband upgrades, and removal of mineral materials.

## IT INVESTMENTS

In FY 2024, the Permitting Council allocated over \$43 million of ERIF Assistance Program funding for development of IT solutions that leverage technology to advance permitting efficiency to support timely infrastructure review processes. These funds are supporting critically needed IT investments to strengthen the efficiency and predictability of federal agency environmental reviews and permitting processes, enabling timely environmental reviews while protecting communities and environmental resources. The Permitting Council continues to work with agencies to ensure staff and leadership support needed to fully realize the benefits of these IT investments.

### Continued support of these IT investments is expected to position agencies to:

- **Automate processes for routine actions, improving public transparency and saving time.** For example, the NTIA will integrate environmental screening into the application process for Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program grants to identify permit requirements and speed up processing of categorical exclusions. USDA Rural Development will create an application portal and tool to determine earlier in the review process whether submissions qualify for categorical exclusions. The U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) will evaluate the feasibility of developing a new system to process routine right of way applications. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) will develop an online Bridge Permit Application System to replace the Word document template currently in use. The online system will reduce duplicative efforts and provide a real-time interface with applicants to ensure an expedited and transparent process. The U.S. Forest Service will build a digital interface for applicants requesting special use authorizations for broadband infrastructure that will serve as a unified permitting point of entry for the public and integrate with an existing backend data system for storing, managing and reporting special use data.
- **Manage complex reviews and improve shared data quality, simplifying coordination, analysis and decision making.** For example, the USFWS will enhance species monitoring systems to reduce review process times through automation and better integrate, preserve, analyze and share information on species and habitats. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will improve the government-wide system of current contact information for Tribal lands to make it easier for users to search for contacts in specific geographic areas, and to update contact information to facilitate timely consultations. The USCG will develop a new mathematical model to facilitate the complex analysis for projects that impact the safety of navigable waters, helping to reduce risks to the safety and security of ports and waterways. The U.S. Geological Survey will extend the utility of the existing NABat web application to more directly meet the needs of resource managers and permitting authorities as they relate to bats, in order to assist in ESA consultations for federal infrastructure projects.

➤ **Leverage technologies to save time and improve environmental and community outcomes.**

For example, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) will plan for and develop a centralized geolocation database of U.S. historic properties to allow federal agencies and project sponsors to accurately and efficiently identify and avoid impacts on historic properties. The USCG will improve and expedite National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) reviews for bridge permits by developing an integrated geographic information system (GIS) layer identifying environmental information and the navigability or jurisdiction of waterways. The U.S. Department of the Interior will use AI to streamline the collection, synthesis and analysis of public comments provided on NEPA reviews. The U.S. Department of Energy will pilot the use of AI to augment the abilities of staff in preparing environmental documents and will extend this pilot to other agencies, exploring how AI can enable agencies to use data and analysis from past reviews to prepare initial draft descriptions for environmental documents.





## Tribal Engagement

The Permitting Council recognizes the capacity issues that Tribes face when participating in the federal environmental review and authorization process for infrastructure projects, including FAST-41 covered projects. Providing funding to support capacity building for Tribal governments to participate in environmental reviews and consultations under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act will help make the environmental review and authorization process for FAST-41 covered projects timelier and more efficient. In FY 2024, the Permitting Council continued to emphasize Tribal consultation and the strengthening of Nation-to-Nation relationships. These efforts lay the groundwork for more efficient and participatory permitting processes in the years to come.

In FY 2024, the Permitting Council developed its Tribal Consultation Policy and Plan, which addresses Permitting Council interactions with federally recognized Tribes and agency activities that may affect Tribal interests. The Policy applies to Permitting Council activities; outlines consultation principles, responsibilities and procedures; and provides for working groups and other efforts to facilitate meaningful dialogue and collaboration. The Policy emphasizes Nation-to-Nation consultation, respecting Tribal sovereignty, and ensuring meaningful consideration of Tribal input.

## Agency Implementation Highlight

ERIF funding continues to support efforts to enhance HUD's Tribal Directory Assessment Tool (TDAT), which provides contact information for Tribal leaders and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, along with counties where the Tribes have current and ancestral interest.

Building on the system improvements initiated in FY 2022, the first phase of development culminated in the full implementation of new editing and synchronization tools. These updates have enabled the TDAT Administrator to perform quarterly data synchronization between the BIA and the National Park Service (NPS) lists, as well as incorporate manual interim updates received directly from Tribes. To date, the TDAT Administrator has successfully completed eight synchronized quarterly updates, ensuring that the TDAT matches the most current BIA and NPS lists. Additionally, 72 direct Tribal data update requests have been processed.

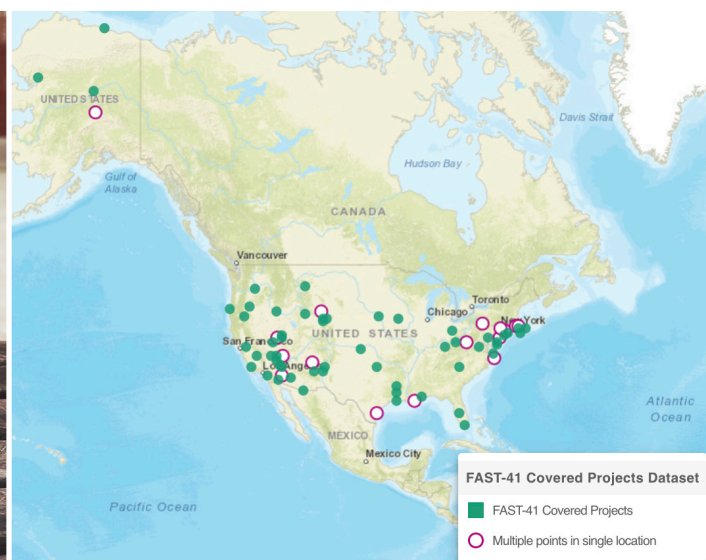
In FY 2024, HUD began efforts to develop an online request form for Tribes to streamline the process of receiving and processing direct data updates from Tribes into TDAT. HUD also scoped work to further improve TDAT's accuracy, reliability, performance, and overall user experience by expanding GIS mapping capabilities, enhancing system usability, and facilitating direct Tribal data inputs. Tribal engagement to shape the development of the project's scope and requirements began in August 2024.

## Permitting Dashboard Improvements

The Permitting Council staff work closely with the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), which manages the Permitting Dashboard, to maintain and enhance the system to facilitate improved FAST-41 implementation by agencies and increase transparency with which Dashboard information is presented to the public. Through regular coordination meetings, including engagement with Dashboard administrators at each agency, the Permitting Council staff and DOT identify priorities and plan system development work. Permitting Council staff also monitor and test Permitting Dashboard features to ensure the system is functioning as expected. Throughout FY 2024, and in cooperation with DOT, the Permitting Council staff made a number of enhancements to Permitting Dashboard functionality that improved useability for federal agency staff. These include:

- Enhancements to how the Dashboard communicates to agencies nonconformance requirements. This has enabled improved agency compliance with FAST-41 requirements regarding nonconformance, including provision of initial explanations for nonconformance, establishment of alternative completion dates, and completion of monthly status reporting. The Permitting Council has also designated a dedicated staff member to work with agencies to meet their reporting requirements.
- Improvements to the CPP form to accommodate Tribes and non-federal agencies as participating agencies in the Roles and Responsibilities section.
- Upgrades to enhance the overall look, feel and navigation of the Dashboard, making it more user-friendly and intuitive.

In FY 2024, the Permitting Council began work to develop a sustainable operations and maintenance solution for the Permitting Dashboard to provide greater control and flexibility to suit the needs of FAST-41. With increased ownership of the Permitting Dashboard, the Permitting Council can maximize the benefits of the Permitting Dashboard as a transparency and accountability tool for timely infrastructure project review and authorization pursuant to the requirements of FAST-41.



*Permitting Dashboard Timetable and FAST-41 Covered Projects Map*

## Permitting Process Initiatives

The Permitting Council introduced efforts to institutionalize FAST-41 processes, analyze the impact and value of FAST-41 on covered projects, and share best practices and tools to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the environmental review and authorization process.

### UPDATED FAST-41 IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

In FY 2024, the Permitting Council, OMB and CEQ worked together to update the [FAST-41 Implementation Guidance](#).<sup>9</sup> The previous version of the guidance was issued in 2017, long before the Permitting Council became a permanent agency. The Permitting Council worked closely with staff in the Executive Office of the President to provide useful and updated guidance for agencies implementing the provisions of FAST-41.

### AFTER ACTION REVIEWS (AARS)

In FY 2024, the Permitting Council began an effort to conduct AARs on projects that have completed the FAST-41 process to understand and inform impact and value for all participants in the FAST-41 process, including project sponsors, FAST-41 lead agencies, and Permitting Council staff. The Permitting Council engaged an independent consultant to facilitate discussions with project sponsors and lead federal agencies at the headquarters and district level (where applicable) to understand how the FAST-41 process contributed to the efficiency, transparency and predictability of project-level environmental reviews and authorizations. The Permitting Council staff appreciate the willingness of the project sponsors and agencies represented on the Permitting Council to participate in this process.

### ADVANCED TRAINING

During FY 2024, the Permitting Council examined training needs across the federal permitting community to more efficiently implement the environmental review and authorization process by addressing identified gaps in permitting workforce capabilities and skill sets. By investing in training solutions as part of our role as a federal center for permitting excellence, the Permitting Council can provide a value-driven, broadly applicable approach to training.

### RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES

The Permitting Council is required to issue [annual recommendations on best practices](#) for improving the federal permitting process for FAST-41 covered projects.<sup>10</sup> In FY 2024 the Permitting Council issued the following best practice recommendations:

- Tracking and reporting environmental and community outcomes
- Tracking and reporting the status of reviews and permitting
- Establishing and implementing issue elevation procedures

Issuing best practices under only selected categories allowed agencies represented on the Permitting Council to focus their efforts in these target areas, and collect data and information needed to meaningfully assess the impacts of the implementation of these best practices. The best practices for

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<sup>9</sup> The guidance was issued in FY 2025, on January 17, 2025.

<sup>10</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 4370m-1(c)(2)(B).

FY 2024 were intended to be actionable and measurable by each agency, to assist the Permitting Council in assessing impacts of best practices across the federal agencies and moving toward a set of meaningful, transformative and evidence-based best practices that drive improvements that lead to timely and efficient environmental reviews and authorizations.



## FAST-41 PERFORMANCE SCHEDULES

Pursuant to 42 USC § 4730m-1(c)(1)(C), the Executive Director must consult with members of the Permitting Council to develop FAST-41 performance schedules (FPSs) for each sector and category of FAST-41 covered projects.

FPSs are designed to represent a baseline for FAST-41 covered projects in the applicable sector or subsector. FPSs provide agencies with a nominal benchmark that can be used to develop timely and realistic project-specific permitting timetables that will vary based on relevant factors, as provided in FAST-41. FPSs are not intended to be all-inclusive of the project-specific factors that may result in more complicated environmental reviews. Rather, they are intended to be used as a starting point for agencies' use in developing project permitting timetables. Those project permitting timetables are expected to vary as necessary based on project-specific factors in order to provide accurate estimates of milestone completion timelines.

In FY 2024, the Permitting Council published [six FPSs](#) for the following sectors and subsectors:

- Electricity transmission
- Interstate natural gas pipelines
- Solar
- Non-federal hydropower - licenses
- Wind - other than federal offshore
- Nuclear power plant - combined (construction and operating) license

The Permitting Council also began coordination with NTIA to develop an FPS for the broadband sector. This performance schedule is expected to benefit not only NTIA, but also the USDA Rural Utilities Service.

## Outreach for Permitting Excellence

During FY 2024, the Permitting Council implemented extensive strategic communications and outreach activities to improve awareness and understanding of FAST-41 and its benefits among project sponsors, the permitting industry, federal agencies, state and local governments, and Tribes.

The Permitting Council's outreach goal is to articulate the value of FAST-41 to target audiences to generate greater interest in FAST-41, expand the portfolio, and increase the number of projects that will benefit from the FAST-41 program. In doing so, the Permitting Council also aims to further establish the agency as a center for permitting excellence in the Federal Government.

Permitting Council outreach activities aim to build connections with potential FAST-41 project sponsors and reinforce the Permitting Council's role as a convenor to solve pressing permitting challenges. Through this engagement, the Permitting Council has improved its understanding of policy and practitioner pain points to help shape services and solutions. As the Permitting Council expects to see more "repeat customers" (i.e., sponsors who have previously sought FAST-41 coverage), the Permitting Council staff recognize the importance of building and maintaining relationships. Proactive engagement within the permitting community has advanced timely and effective environmental reviews and authorizations.



## INDUSTRY OUTREACH

In FY 2024, the Permitting Council engaged with infrastructure project developers to raise awareness of the benefits of FAST-41 coverage, better understand industry's perspective on environmental review and authorization process challenges, and cultivate relationships.

In the second half of FY 2024, the Permitting Council planned for an Infrastructure Developers Summit, to be held in the early part of FY 2025 (October 8, 2024). The event was designed to gather permitting experts and decision makers with project developers in Washington, DC to explore permitting opportunities and challenges, while strategizing best practices for improving the federal permitting process and bringing next generation infrastructure to life. More than 200 attendees were expected, including representatives from federal agencies, Congress, state and local governments, and industry. The summit would underscore the economic benefits of efficient permitting, and that permitting is for the public good and worth investing in.

## What Industry Representatives are Saying About the Value of the Permitting Council:

- The Permitting Council is a **resource**: Project developers described FAST-41 and the work of the Permitting Council as a resource. While the Permitting Council does not have the ability to issue permits or change permitting requirements, when a project runs into a roadblock or hurdle, the agency is a resource that brings all involved stakeholders to the table to address the issue and develop a plan of action to move the process forward. Outside of FAST-41 this level of coordination is not common, with federal agencies too often working in silos, lacking the communication and facilitation that is essential to an efficient process.
- The Permitting Council is a **much needed guide**: The Permitting Council was described as a valuable partner and guide for project sponsors as they navigate the federal permitting process. Permitting Council staff help ensure that project sponsors can raise issues, have a seat at the table to discuss those issues, and see that there is follow through from permitting agencies on resolution. The Permitting Council uses the FAST-41 process to bring much needed coordination and collaboration into the federal permitting process. The Permitting Council guides projects through the system with transparency, predictability and accountability with a level of customer service that isn't typical in the traditional process.
- **FAST-41 is timely**: Project sponsors said that FAST-41 encourages stakeholders to come to solutions faster, which improves the overall efficiency of the process. By bringing coordination and collaboration to the process, FAST-41 can result in more timely decision making in federal permitting.



*Permitting Council Infrastructure Developers Summit*

The Permitting Council participated in more than 50 external engagements with infrastructure industry stakeholders in FY 2024. These external engagements improve the profile of the Permitting Council and awareness of FAST-41. External engagements provide an opportunity to show the services and initiatives that the agency provides, positioning the Permitting Council for more industry participation in the future. Industry engagement helps improve project sponsor understanding of the permitting process and agencies' understanding of challenges project sponsors may experience with the process, so that Permitting Council staff can work with the agencies to resolve these issues.



*Permitting Council staff visiting Sparrows Point project*

## CONGRESSIONAL OUTREACH

In FY 2024, the Permitting Council prioritized broad engagement with Congressional members and staff to educate them about the Permitting Council and the activities it is undertaking as an agency. The Permitting Council conducted many briefings to Congressional staff in Washington, DC and in states to share how the agency is helping other federal agencies implement more efficient and transparent environmental reviews and authorizations.

In August 2024, the Permitting Council led Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs (HSGAC) staff on a tour of several renewable energy and mining FAST-41 project sites in the southwest, including meetings with industry representatives and state officials. This visit enabled Committee staff to see firsthand the results of the work of the Permitting Council to move major infrastructure projects forward and hear directly from industry and state agencies about the benefits of FAST-41 and the Permitting Council to their goals and projects.

## Implementation

### Highlight: New Mexico Renewable Energy Transmission Authority (RETA) MOU

The Permitting Council entered into a MOU with the New Mexico RETA that established a working relationship between the agencies in order to provide federal permitting support to RETA-supported grid infrastructure projects that also qualify for coverage under FAST-41. This collaborative state-federal partnership is helping to bring the benefits of federal permitting assistance to New Mexico to bring consequential infrastructure projects to life.

## STATE OUTREACH

This year, the Permitting Council also sought to improve outreach to states to increase awareness of FAST-41 and the support that the Permitting Council can provide. Congressional funding enabled the Permitting Council to provide direct funding to states to facilitate timely and efficient environmental reviews and authorizations of FAST-41 projects. The Permitting Council may also provide informal support via partnerships and technical assistance. The Permitting Council's support is another federal tool that states can leverage to help navigate what can be a difficult federal permitting process, on top of state permitting processes.

States with FAST-41 covered projects within their boundaries are eligible to participate in the FAST-41 process for a covered project, generally known as the state "opt-in" provision.<sup>11</sup> When a state chooses to participate in FAST-41, it makes eligible those state agencies that are responsible for undertaking environmental reviews and authorizations for a covered project to the statutory requirements of FAST-41 as though the state agencies were federal agencies. Implementation of the FAST-41 "opt-in" provision would likely improve federal-state coordination of covered project permitting efforts as envisioned by statute and additionally may help facilitate predictable and timely state authorizations for FAST-41 covered projects.

The Permitting Council developed a template memorandum of understanding (MOU) that the facilitating or lead agency could use to encourage state participation in the FAST-41 process and made the state "opt-in" MOU available to states. The Permitting Council also educated states and relevant stakeholders about the MOU to encourage broader state participation.



*Permitting Council staff and HSGAC staff visiting the South32 Hermosa Critical Minerals Project site in Arizona*

<sup>11</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 4370m-2(c)(3)(A)

## Interagency Collaboration

In FY 2024, the Permitting Council worked across the federal family to troubleshoot particular permitting issues; more deeply engage on historic preservation; better leverage data, technology, and performance management to improve permitting processes; and update the Permitting Council charter.

### INTERAGENCY IT AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT COLLABORATIONS

In October 2023, CEQ, OMB and the Permitting Council convened agency officials and professionals from the environmental and IT sectors for an Environmental Permitting Technology and Data Summit. The purpose of the Summit was to share knowledge and build a community of practice around improving the efficiency and effectiveness of environmental reviews and permits through use of technology and data. The Summit featured participation from universities, private industry, and many federal agencies, including presentations by the Permitting Council. The Summit highlighted agency issues around streamlining workflows and demonstrated technology solutions that successfully meet user needs.

Additionally, the Permitting Council, OMB, CEQ and the Performance Improvement Council hosted an interagency Performance Measurement for Permitting Agencies Workshop in November 2023. This interactive workshop included a presentation on performance measurement followed by a collaborative working session for agency performance and permitting teams to discuss how to develop, or refine, meaningful performance indicators to measure progress in strengthening and accelerating the federal environmental review and permitting process for infrastructure projects.



## ACHP OBSERVER ROLE

The Executive Director was appointed as an Observer to the ACHP in September 2024, to serve a two-year term starting October 1, 2024. The ACHP works closely with the Permitting Council to ensure the federal historic preservation review process effectively and efficiently assesses project impacts while still protecting historic properties. The ACHP chair may appoint Observers to bring additional insight and expertise to the ACHP. The Chair appointed the Executive Director to allow the Executive Director to better understand policy issues in the space and provide an opportunity for the Executive Director to share broader infrastructure permitting policy perspectives with the Council.



## PERMITTING COUNCIL CHARTER UPDATE

During FY 2024, the Permitting Council worked on updates to its Charter defining governance structures for how members communicate, coordinate, and vote on matters. The Charter was last updated in December 2017, before the Permitting Council became a permanent agency. The updated Charter, which was finalized in FY 2025, adds information about the Permitting Council's role as a center for permitting excellence and the ERIF assistance program. The document also clarifies the authorities of the Executive Director and their staff and responsibilities of the Permitting Council Members and CERPOs, as well as OMB and CEQ.

## Agency Implementation Highlight

In September 2022, the USCG Bridge Program held a virtual nationwide information session for over 700 attendees, which included federal regulators, state departments of transportation, private companies, and consultants. Additionally, USCG held information sessions for individual states and their consultants. USCG compared bridge permitting metrics from before and after the information sessions to determine their benefit to the permitting process. As a result, since the USCG implemented these information sessions, between 2022 and 2024, overall permit timelines (from the date the initial application was submitted to the final documentation received) decreased by an average of 46 percent due to applicants better understanding the permitting and environmental review requirements and processes. As an example, timelines for bridge permit applications for the State of Delaware decreased by 3.7 months from 8.5 to 4.8 months, or 44 percent.

## Agency Performance Trends

FY 2024 has seen continued progress in the implementation of FAST-41 by the agencies. One hundred percent of projects with CPP deadlines in FY 2024 met the requirement to post a CPP within 60 days of the project being added to the Permitting Dashboard. Agencies also met their FAST-41 requirements to review and update their CPPs 100 percent of the time. The CPP is central to the management of the environmental review and authorization process for a FAST-41 covered project. The permitting timetable, which is posted and managed publicly on the Permitting Dashboard according to the requirements of FAST-41, provides transparency, predictability, and a comprehensive view of all the steps that are necessary for completion of the federal environmental review and authorization process. Agencies also showed improvement in posting required project information over the course of FY 2024.

For the seven FAST-41 covered projects that completed RODs in FY 2024, the average EIS timeline (measured from NOI to ROD) was 2.8 years, 23 percent faster than the 3.6-year average EIS timeline derived from [government-wide data](#) for all EISs completed FY 2024<sup>12</sup>

FAST-41 provides flexibility for agencies to set timelines and update anticipated completion dates on the project permitting timetable as needed, as long as updates are made according to the consultation and disclosure requirements established in the FAST-41 statute. Compliance with these FAST-41 requirements is tracked on a [quarterly basis](#) for all FAST-41 covered projects.

Following further coordination with agencies represented on the Permitting Council, the Permitting Council staff intends to continue to integrate new measures into future quarterly agency performance reports to provide additional context and more fully tell the story of agency implementation of FAST-41.

<sup>12</sup> For the five FAST-41 covered projects that completed FEISs in FY 2024, the average EIS timeline (measured from NOI to FEIS) was 2.7 years, 25 percent faster than the 3.7-year average EIS timeline derived from government-wide data for all FEISs completed in FY 2024.

# Appendix: Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>AAR</b>	After Action Review	<b>HUD</b>	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
<b>ACHP</b>	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	<b>HSGAC</b>	Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
<b>AI</b>	Artificial intelligence	<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>BIA</b>	U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs	<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>CERPO</b>	Chief Environmental Review and Permitting Officer	<b>NEPA</b>	National Environmental Policy Act
<b>CEQ</b>	Council on Environmental Quality	<b>NIST</b>	U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology
<b>CPP</b>	Coordinated Project Plan	<b>NOI</b>	Notice of Intent
<b>DHS</b>	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	<b>NTIA</b>	U.S. National Telecommunications and Information Administration
<b>DOT</b>	U.S. Department of Transportation	<b>OMB</b>	Office of Management and Budget
<b>EIS</b>	Environmental Impact Statement	<b>Permitting Council</b>	The 16-Member Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council
<b>ERIF</b>	Environmental Review Improvement Fund	<b>Permitting Council staff</b>	The employees and contractors of the agency that support the Executive Director in the execution of statutory roles and responsibilities
<b>ESA</b>	Endangered Species Act	<b>RETA</b>	New Mexico Renewable Energy Transmission Authority
<b>Executive Director</b>	Permitting Council Executive Director	<b>ROD</b>	Record of Decision
<b>FAST-41</b>	Title 41 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act	<b>TDAT</b>	Tribal Directory Assistance Tool
<b>FEIS</b>	Final Environmental Impact Statement	<b>USCG</b>	U.S. Coast Guard
<b>FIN</b>	FAST-41 Initiation Notice	<b>USDA</b>	U.S. Department of Agriculture
<b>FPS</b>	FAST-41 Performance Schedules	<b>USFWS</b>	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
<b>FY</b>	Fiscal Year		
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information System		