

WRA'S GUIDE TO

Wholesale Electricity Markets for Tribes



Introduction to Wholesale Electricity Markets

Companies whose power plants generate most of the electricity delivered to homes and businesses every day can sell that electricity on what are called wholesale markets. By coordinating electricity across multiple states, these markets can maximize decarbonization, reliability, and cost benefits with a larger footprint of diverse energy resources.

How Wholesale Electricity Markets Operate in the West

Two market operators, California Independent System Operator (CAISO) and Southwest Power Pool (SPP), are expanding their services into the West. Most utilities in the West already participate in an energy imbalance market, such as CAISO's Western Energy Imbalance Market (WEIM) or SPP's Western Energy Imbalance Service (WEIS). Many of the largest utilities in the West will join a day-ahead market starting in 2026 or 2027: CAISO's Extended Day-Ahead Market (EDAM) or SPP's Markets+. Some utilities are also already looking at options to join the most centralized form of market, a regional transmission organization (RTO). RTOs operate in much of the U.S. and Canada but not currently in most of the West.

Impacts of Wholesale Electricity Markets on Tribes

A well-functioning market may enable Tribes to sell energy from Tribal generation projects, and can be a source of lower-cost, lower-emissions power to Tribal customers. As markets develop, establishing inclusive decision-making processes can be an avenue for increased Tribal participation in energy planning so that Tribal rights, values, and priorities are included. Many market operators haven't adequately consulted with Tribes on markets development, and don't have a pathway for Tribes to participate in decision-making. As Western markets expand, it will be important to honor trust responsibly through direct consultation and to analyze impacts and benefits for Tribes.

Utilities that Serve Tribes are Already Planning to Join Day-Ahead Markets*



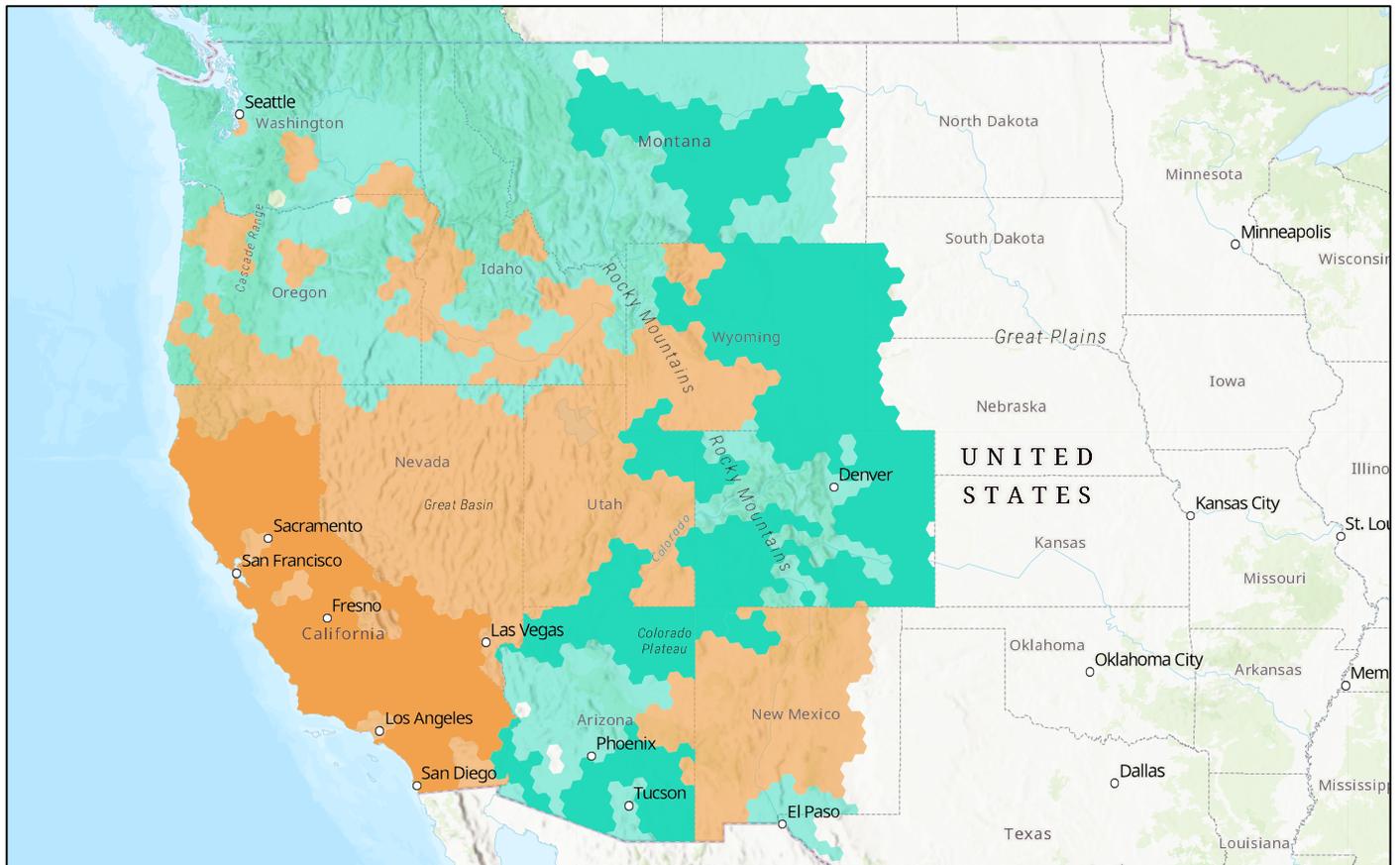
*Co-ops are also evaluating market options.

Tribal Input About Wholesale Electricity Markets

The steps towards a wholesale energy market are new to the West, some Tribal governments have voiced their concerns on BPA's most recent plan to join Markets+ and WAPA's decision to join the SPP RTO expansion in the West. Leading intertribal organizations are also advocating for Tribal rights and priorities on this issue.

The multi-Tribal utility, Oceti Sakowin Power Authority, has been working for several years to connect its wind project to the SPP RTO. In 2021, Morongo Transmission became the first Tribal transmission owner to participate in CAISO.

CAISO and SPP Western Expansion



As of 6/13/2025

- MARKETS+ (PROJECTED)
- SPP EXPANSION (PROJECTED)
- EDAM (PROJECTED)
- CAISO



Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Esri, USGS

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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